

DUKE'S DAUGHTER WHO IS LIABLE TO DIE AND THE SEVEN NOBLES

— Shini Yasui Kōshaku Reijō to Nana-ri no Kikōshi —

- VOLUME 3 -

Erica Aurelia and the False Silver Vein

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[Starry Night Translation]

Chapter 54

City of Canals (1)

Four months had passed since the incidents involving Auguste and the angel – that was the advent of the early summer.

The season changed and the color of the trees changed from green full of vitality to soft red and yellow.

The dwelling space of the Duke of Aurelia had also moved to <Autumn Palace> in a small warm land.

This palace was a palace in the golden forest as it was surrounded by trees with leaves that turned yellow such as Ginkgo biloba, etc.

From the veranda in my room, I could see the golden forest and it looked like a yellow carpet.

I sat on the chair placed on the veranda while holding two envelopes I had received from a maid.

Then Tirnanog came out from under the tablecloth.

[Are those letters?]

“Yeah, they seemed to have reached Spring Palace, these letters are from Klaus and Auguste.”

[The black-haired good-looking dwarf and the prince with blonde hair. What is written on them?]

“Wait a moment...”

I opened the letter from Klaus.

Rendered speechless by the simplicity of it for a moment, I read the letter aloud.

“...‘Are you in good health? Do not lose to anyone until I return to Ichthyes.

I got even stronger. I can hardly wait for the day when I can meet you again.’...”

[This time, it's a letter of challenge for sure.]

"As expected, it's similar to a letter of challenge."

It was troubling that he still wanted to put me in the position of his rival.

Even now he was acting with Eduart-oniisama in the South, so I was hoping that he was being reformed or tempered himself a little.

Or rather, maybe this happened because he continued to taste defeat after challenging my older brother many times?

Maybe he had the idea of first trying to prevail after winning against me as his sister?

Drowsiness began to creep up owing to the fact that I used the part of my head that I never used.

It wasn't good to carry mental stress.

I decided not to see the letter from Klaus, I would pull myself together after reading Auguste's letter.

There was a pressed flower using a vibrant flower that seemed to be from the South. And from the paper, the faint fragrant of the perfume of the flower could be smelled.

"Dear Erica.

By the time this letter arrives, it will definitely be autumn in Aurelia.

I will deliver the summer remnant of Ignitia.

I will be glad if you like it."

[Hou, the prince with blonde hair is quite refreshing.]

"Here, I am as busy as ever.

There is so much work to do as a prince and it is very difficult for me to stretch my wings.

Oh yeah, as part of that work, I decided to attend the launching ceremony which will be held soon at Knot Reed.

I heard that the Aurelia Ducal will participate as well.

I'm really looking forward to see you again after a long absence."

[Launching ceremony... aah, it's the location for that plan.]

I nodded back to Tirnanog's interjection.

In the launching ceremony that would be held in the Trade City of Knot Reed, we were planning to avoid the next death flag.

"My dragons are about to hatch from their eggs soon.

If there is an opportunity, I will introduce them during the launching ceremony.

At that time, I hope you can get along with them.

May the grace of God be with you.'... that's what he said."

[Good news, huh.]

"Yes, we must also tell Palug about this."

[That said, I thought that it was unusually quiet... where is that cat?]

Tirnanog climbed up the handrail and looked around the garden.

I also got up and looked around for Palug's figure.

When I looked down at the garden, a maid stopped sweeping the yard and was waving her hand towards this direction.

Silver hair stretched to the shoulder, suntanned skin.

She was a girl whose face somewhat resembled Auguste.

(Hm... a girl? Wait a minute, is that really a girl...?)

The person whose gender was unknown ran slightly, jumped up and landed on the handrail of the veranda.

Huh? But, this place was the third floor!?

"!?"

[Cat. Erica will be surprised. Do not appear suddenly with unfamiliar appearance.]

"My, my, I'm sorry. I'm just very glad that my power came back."

The maid pinched her skirt and curtsied while sticking out her tongue.

Cat ears appeared between her hair and a cat's tail jumped out from the hem of her skirt.

It seemed that it was the transformed figure of Palug.

"That was surprising... who are you turning into right now? From the look of the face, is it someone from the royal family of Ignitia?"

"This is the childhood figure of my King Guillaume. Isn't it cute?"

While saying so, Palug raised both of her lightly curled hands on both sides of her face and took a cat-like pose.

Ah, if I looked closely, unlike Auguste, the color of the eyes was sky blue.

"Guillaume is the ancestor of Auguste and the Founder King of Ignitia, right?"

Is it really okay if you use such a great person's appearance to wear female clothing?"

[Hundreds of years after his death, only to be blasphemed by a domestic cat... what a pitiful man.]

"Eh~. What's with those reactions. Even though this appearance is so cute."

"It's cute, but please stop it."

I had no excuse for the people of Ignitia if they knew that a look-alike figure of the Founder King was seen wearing female clothing.

If the color of the eyes changed, it was practically Auguste, so the feeling of guilt was doubled.

When I offered the letter from Auguste as a shield to request for her to release the transformation, Palug nodded with a reluctant expression.

Palug made a turn with a twirl.

In a blink of an eye, her appearance changed and she was in the figure of her usual gorgeous beauty.

The clothes that she was wearing changed from the maid's clothes to a southern-style dress.

It seemed that Palug's original ability was to imitate the figure and voice of the contractor who she ever got blood from.

According to the person herself, she seemed to have been a phantom beast of a cat who only had the ability to transform before becoming an angel.

It was only after Ignitia's only God had taken her in, that she got the characteristics of heat and light.

Resting and ingesting one drop of my blood each day, gradually the power of Palug was returning.

For now, it seemed that her ability to transform was recovering faster than her ability to fight as an angel.

"My, my, even though it's a love letter addressed to Erica from Auguste, my heart is also fluttering~"

"It's not a love letter. I think that it's a normal status report that friends give each other."

I decided to deny it after taking the distant future into consideration.

It wasn't good idea to make too much misunderstanding, so I would like her to do it in moderation.

"Eeeh! The eggs finally hatched?!"

We have to celebrate it! I will demand a full-blown festival as the guardian angel of the country!"

[Cat... you're becoming an angel only when it is convenient for you...]

Palug hugged the letter as she was spinning and dancing.

It seemed that she didn't hear his words.

Since the dragons' hatching was a long-standing wish of Auguste and Palug, it was reasonable.

[Cat. Getting carried away and all is fine, but you better have improved at that ability to transform of yours.

We can't bring a useless freeloader, you know.]

When Tirnanog called her out in provocation, Palug suddenly stopped moving and her face turned serious.

"How rude. I'm going to be much more useful than a dead-weight fake dragon, you know?"

[Hah, the other day you were just all talk and no action.]

"Fine. I will show you the result of my practice!"

Palug turned around once and transformed.

Golden hair rolled softly, eyes as green as emerald.

A girl around eight years old wearing a dark blue simple dress appeared.

The one who appeared was exactly me, Erica Aurelia.

Except, that 'me' had cat ears and tail.

[Cat... the monster parts are still there...]

"Oh no... I have to change the plan..."

"What~. This is just a little joke."

When Palug covered them with her hands, the cat ears and tail disappeared.

This time she became completely like me.

"Amazing, Palug. With this, it will be fine even if you replaced me."

[No, she still has long ways to go.

The eyes are too sparkling, and the expression is too lively.

You might be able to fool strangers, but you cannot fool her father or older brother.]

"Fufufu. Today I'm different from before. How about this?"

All of a sudden, facial expression disappeared from the face of the 'me' that Palug had turned herself into.

Her mouth formed a thin smile, but it didn't seem like she was having fun at all.

Her emotion couldn't be read from the eyes, and she felt somewhat like an artificial product.

Rather than being a gaudy and malicious girl, she seemed like a boss whose specialty was criticizing and cursing.

[Ooooh!!]

"...This is exactly the same, isn't it?"

[Umu, the voice color is also perfect. In this case you may even be able to fool me.]

"Fufufu. This is the result of steady observation."

Palug who turned into me smiled quietly.

Eh, it felt somewhat scary.

"Huh? Am I so scary when you look at me objectively?"

[You are not scary. I like your calm and reserved impressions.]

"The emotions you expressed are also watered down, huh. But I think you are cute like a doll."

I wondered how far I could trust the sensibilities of the phantom beasts.

I would make more efforts to look cheerful that was appropriate for my age.

"This perfect-level of transformation seems to be fine. You will be able to makeshift for me while we're dealing with the next oracle of ruins."

When I began to talk, the two phantom beasts nodded with a daring smile showed on their faces.

"The next key person's name is Harold Nibelheim.

The only son of Earl Nibelheim, the feudal lord of Nibelheim which is adjacent to the City of Canals, Knot Reed."

Chapter 55

City of Canals (2)

At the time when Lindis Magic Academy was celebrating All Souls' Day, there was an outbreak of young women from distinguished families being spirited away.

In the bustle, the dead body which flowed to the riverbank was one of the students who was being spirited away, it was Erica Aurelia.

The heroine, Chloe, searched for the truth of the case with her redheaded classmate Harold.

This was the rough plot of the third scenario 'All Souls' Day's Spirited Away Case.'

Now then, what kind of person was Harold Nibelheim which was the capture target?

Burning red hair made into a ponytail, dark green eyes.

Among the capture targets, he was tall enough to compete as being the tallest one.

The protruding tooth that looked like a fang and the scar on his right cheek gave the viewer a wild impression.

An outlaw with a bad atmosphere and a cynical view against the world.

Harold entered as a King's Scholar, a scholarship system for civilians.

But, originally he should have been a nobleman who was the successor of Earl Nibelheim.

This was a point in common with Chloe who enrolled as a King's Scholar while being a duke's daughter.

It was also a few points of contact for Chloe regarding Harold's secretiveness.

Harold was a western noble, but the blood of Visitor's Clan was diluted inside him.

He was the descendant of indigenous people who dominated the mountainous region of northwest before the Visitor's Clan arrived in this place.

Although the indigenous people were in harmony with the Visitor's Clan, they didn't lose their identity and still maintained their cultures and pedigrees.

This was why there were more red hair than blonde in the north-western part of the continent.

Although it was not as good as the four royal houses, Harold had a good life as the son of an old noble family.

His fate, which originally supposed to lead him to have a stable life, would change completely on a certain day.

The cause was that his father, Earl Nibelheim, had been found guilty of a silver vein fraud.

Immediately after that, as an additional blow, the market price of silver made abnormal fluctuations due to the fine silver circulated from other territory.

Through these two incidents, the production of silverware, which was the main industry of the territory of Nibelheim, was hit hard.

Even though he was struggling to prevent the inevitable destruction somehow, it was all in vain, and the Earl Nibelheim was bankrupt.

Earl Nibelheim gave up his peerage together with the territory which he couldn't rule anymore.

Due to being overwhelmed by the mental and physical stress resulted from this case, Harold's father died of illness in despair.

Ruined, Harold who became a shell of his former self enrolled in Lindis as a scholarship student after the hardship.

That was where my knowledge of the game ended.

I hadn't been aware of the truth of the case because I was killed in the middle of playing through the third scenario.

What was something related to Harold that became the cause of my death?

If it was the usual, after his downfall, Harold would unleash some type of monstro.

Then, I guessed the one who would be murdered first was me.

Anyway, drowning seemed to be tremendously painful so I really wanted to avoid it.

It was too much to drink plenty of cold river water in autumn and floated on the

riverbank.

Aside from that.

The County of Nibelheim was a land bordering Lucanrant.

It was far from the Duchy of Aurelia and it would be difficult to always keep an eye for the fraud.

However, just working directly on the capture target didn't immediately mean death flag avoidance.

The Trade City of Knot Reed where the launching ceremony would be held was adjacent to that Nibelheim territory.

It was my opportunity to destroy the death flag.

On this occasion, we would collect information on the fraud while we were in Knot Reed, and prevented the downfall of the Nibelheim family.

The main plan this time was to catch the con artist.

Of course, I was also going to check out the local phantom beast that was likely to be the direct cause of my death.



Under the gray sky.

A pure white sail was billowing as it was being blew by strong wind.

It was the first time for me to travel by boat, so my heart was beating fast indiscretely.

While drawing a white wake on the dark green surface of sea, the large merchant ship owned by Duke of Aurelia went north to the north-western coast towards Knot Reed.

This route was said to be an old route of history which had been used since the opening port of Knot Reed.

The required number of days from departure until arrival was about ten days.

It took a few days to bypass the waters where the flock of krakens that exist in Knot Reed's ocean were living.

Still, routes that diverged largely via the open sea had been favoured by safety-conscious traders.

I was walking on the deck with phantom beasts disguised as a cat and a small golem.

In this case, amidst the howling of the wind and waves, the creaking sounds of the hull, and the yelling of the sailors, our conversation wouldn't be heard unless we were approached.

Thinking that way, we dared to stand in an open place like this for our secret conversation.

"In other words, don't let Earl Nibelheim get scammed, so that he won't fall into ruins. We should also make sure that Harold doesn't make contact with the phantom beast even in the worst case."

[Erica, I feel like you are making a sloppy strategy the same as last time.]

He pointed out my sore spot.

Certainly I was a little sloppy, and there was a part in the plan where it was too optimistic.

"In order not to be too late, this time we will take countermeasures against the phantom beast from an early stage, so it will be fine."

[Umu. That is fine.

I feel uneasy that we have no guide who is familiar with the lore of the north-western land.]

On the Island of Messenger, thanks to Auguste, I could do it with ease.

But, because I didn't have any acquaintance in Knot Reed, it wouldn't proceed that smoothly.

In any case, I had no choice but to investigate on our own.

"There is no choice but to do a literature research and a field study steadily."

[Then, after all, I should handle the field survey as a light muscle workout for my feet.]

“Sorry, Palug. Even though I already asked you to substitute for me.”

It seemed that I would be asking for a rather tough job on the wounded Palug. She would be my substitute during daytime and survey the surrounding areas at night.

[Don't mind it. Because it is my wish to help my master.

Besides, because there is something I want to investigate, it is better for me to be free to move around.]

[It's about the altar of Ignitia, huh.]

The altar for Ignitia's rituals was gathering magical powers derived from the faith of their God's believers in the surrounding.

The collected magical power was converted into the power exclusively for the phantom beasts that had been transformed into angels and distributed them evenly.

It almost seemed like a system.

It was said that the power of faith obtained from the altar had gradually decreased in recent decades.

When Palug was on the Island of Messenger, she was presuming that it might be caused by people's beliefs were getting away from their only God and angels.

She also had no way to confirm it because her contact with other angels dispatched to various places had also stopped.

With loneliness and anxiety building up, she was convinced that she was gradually being forgotten.

However, in fact that was not the case.

The people's beliefs in their only God and angels were still strong as ever.

[In the vicinity of Ignitia, there is no outright decline in faith and the altar is well maintained.

Within the range confirmed in the last few months, there are no problems around Spring Palace and Autumn Palace as well.

Then there is a possibility that the important altar in a remote place had been destroyed.]

“Destroying the altar of the religion of the religious country, Ignitia... if that is true, then it seems politically problematic.”

[Well, it is not urgent because my existence is stable with the power I received from you now.

If I can make a light investigation during my stay, that is enough for me.]

I nodded to the opinion of Palug.

If it wasn't something impossible, I had no reason to object.

If she had a free time, that could be a way for Palug to spend it.

Now then, back to the topic in hand.

I would summarize the key points of our schedule of actions again during our stay in Knot Reed.

“There are two priority action targets.

First is to find the fraudster and stop the downfall of Earl Nibelheim.

The other is to investigate the local beast in the north-western part and if possible, negotiate whether we could settle this peacefully.”

[What if the phantom beast was hostile?]

“First of all we will regroup. The policy would be forcing it to accept our demand with force.”

[It's our turn... was what I wanted to say, but now that we are weakened, I feel uneasy depending on the identity of our opponent.

The wands that you have would be damaged or consumed, is that fine?]

Certainly, I think that it would be necessary for me to cover Tirnanog and Palug's blind spots with wands.

However, a lot of my supplies had been decreasing during the two consecutive warfare of the Ruins of Visitor and the Island of Messenger.

For that matter, I was thinking about the measures for the time being.

“I planned to charge the wands and purchase some materials in the city of Knot Reed.

There seems to be many skilled wandmakers over there.”

Actually, I was secretly looking forward to shop for alchemy-related things.

According to the information I got beforehand, it seemed that it was a city with a fine selection of goods.

Suddenly the hull was shaking, Palug turned her head towards the end of the sea.

Tirnanog also climbed onto the railing and stared at the same direction.

[Ah, are we almost there? It smells of people and metal.]

[Certainly, the smell of human activities is drifting through the wind. I'm used to this, this is the smell of alchemy.]

"I only smell the tide..."

Since they were phantom beasts, both of them had an amazing sense of smell.

When the two of them were pointing their line of sights towards that direction, a small shadow emerged from the horizon.

Sea birds cried in the distance.

As the ship approached, the shadow became bigger and the shape of the land gradually appeared clearly.

Within the canals that spread out like a mesh, numerous merchant ships and cargo ships were coming and going.

Beyond the fog which was covering the city a little, the fire of many lighthouses was flashing.

The Trade City of Knot Reed.

The only wide area river located at the mouth of the Varnalis River, the oldest port on the west coast of the Ichthyes continent.

If it was a legitimate item, it was said that there was nothing you couldn't buy here, this was the center of logistics.

Chapter 56

City of Canals (3)

There were two large rivers on Ichthyes.

From Hafan's lake as the source, pouring through the boundary between Lucanrant and Aurelia towards the west via Lindis to Knot Reed, the Varnalis River.

From the lake at the boundary between Hafan and Aurelia, Alleska River flowed into the territorial waters of Ignitia while meandering towards the southwest via Lindis.

Both of them had little rise and fall differences and people could enter the inland areas with large vessels.

In addition, each branch divided into more than twenty small rivers that covered the majority of the continent, forming a circulation of important traffic routes in the Federal Kingdom.

After the skirmish in the northwest after Aurelia's arrival by ship, the dam was built by the migrants from Aurelia at the mouth of the river of the largest branch of the Varnalis River.

This was the beginning of Knot Reed.

Everything flowed in Varnalis River, which was the cornerstone of water transports.

Therefore, everything gathered at the port of Knot Reed which was built at the mouth of the river.

And the shipbuilding industry to transport them was also explosively growing by harmonizing with Aurelia.

Not only merchant ships and fishing vessels but military vessels were also built in shipyard areas located in the city.

Battle ships for Aurelia built with numerous athanor cannons.

Cruisers equipped with magical armor which could also be called huge spell cards exclusively for Hafan's mages.

For the country of dragon knights Ignitia, an air carrier to operate 10-meter class

dragons on the sea.

“What is built this time is a new type of aircraft carrier incorporating a state-of-the-art mechanism in the power section.

The dragon knights of the former aircraft carrier who had been stationed at Knot Reed originally will switch to the new model during the launching ceremony.”

“Which one is the aircraft carrier?”

“The old aircraft carrier seems to be on the ocean in order to train for the demonstration that will be carried out in the launching ceremony.

Don’t worry, when the launching ceremony begins you will be able to see both the old and new aircraft carriers.”

Saying so, Otou-sama stroked my head.

There was a huge shipyard appearance in the direction pointed by him.

I was interested in how big the ship that was being built was, but it seemed it would be a sight to see during the launching ceremony.

In the meantime, our merchant ship arrived at the harbor.

However, our voyage didn’t end here.

We would switch to a small rowing boat along with a few servants.

It was a rowing boat that looked just like a gondola.

It seemed that it was faster to go through the canal whenever you went on the canal street of Knot Reed.

We got on the small boat and looked around the city as we moved through the canal.

Many ships were coming and going near the mouth of the river and it was very lively.

A cargo ship with various kinds of luggage, a sightseeing ship that was kind of bigger than our small boat.

The origin and occupation of the people riding on them were also diverse.

Turning back a little, our small boat entered an area where large buildings such as cathedrals lined up along the canal.

The religious building had white walls and gray roof.

It had calm colors, but the elaborate decorations made it look luxurious.

We came across a group of nuns who were just going to move by boat and we waved and greeted them.

When we were passing by a place corresponding to the intersection on the road, I saw the other side and I felt dizzy.

Like an infinite loop of a mirror, similar scenery was repeated.

“Otou-sama, it seems like the canal is continuing everywhere.”

“The large canal has 20 rings. Including the small canals, there are several times more than that in total.

Knot Reed is made up of one hundred islands separated by canals and two thousand bridges.”

“That’s very amazing.”

“Aah, it’s a land that has been developed for trading since ancient times.”

It was said that the canal was stretched concentrically around a river that was flowing in the center.

It was said that the transportation cost was overwhelmingly low, thanks to the terrain called the canal rings.

After passing through the gray roofs area, we entered the red-orange roofs area.

Various specialty shops were joining their eaves, and in the distance there were signboards with designs concentrated like beautiful accessories were glittering under the sunlight.

The voices of sellers who were attracting customers could be heard.

It was a vibrant part of the area with overwhelmingly large numbers of people.

“This is Knot Reed’s famous place, <Town of All Kinds of Goods>.

Just like the name ‘All Kinds of Goods’, the merchants here boast that there is nothing they don’t have in this town.”

“That’s interesting.”

“I’m sorry, but we cannot afford to stop by for a while.

After the launching ceremony, let’s look around even between my works.”

“Yes, I will look forward to that.”

I was really brimming with the intention to sneak away and visit this Town of All Kinds of Goods.

As I was feeling a mild guilt, I replied to Otou-sama with a smile.

The small boat crossed the canal under the big bridge.

Suddenly, a huge building appeared in front of my eyes when the field of vision was cleared out at once.

It looked like a religious building and felt solemn but had been decorated with secular architecture everywhere.

This was the place where we were going to stay, <Water Palace>.

Our party of Aurelia got off the boat at a small square in front of the palace, we were guided by the servant of the palace who had been waiting.

The interior of Water Palace was precisely decorated based on white and gold.

It was a technique of advanced craftsmen who gave a luxurious but pure impression, a fusion of Aurelia-style and Hafan-style.

There were hundreds of rooms in this vast palace, which was also called as the Labyrinth Palace.

It seemed that I would get lost if I wasn’t careful.

Because it was a palace with many rooms, I was given a room by myself.

Well, since it would make it easier to sneak out, I was fine with it.

We quickly changed from our traveling outfit to formal attires in our given room, and headed to the hall where other aristocrats had arrived earlier.



The owner of Water Palace was the Turm family.

Their ancestors were masons and mages from Hafan.

However, they seemed to have been immersed in Knot Reed's shipbuilding and water transportation, and they emigrated some time ago.

They were the first one to develop a merchant ship with expanded interior by space manipulation magic, sold it and gained funds.

What made him rise as a wealthy merchant was the time he made a killing by maritime insurance for the traders.

Approximately twenty years ago, the predecessor of the Turm family bought the Viscount rank and became a nobleman.

Because the Visitor's Clan didn't care about the status system, some nobles didn't have territories in the western region to buy a rank like them.

In the case of the Turm family, there was a view that they governed huge networks and multiple ships by multiple businesses instead of a territory.

After we gave our greetings to Viscount Turm, I was taught about the beginning of the Turm family.

The current principal was a bald middle-aged man who seemed to be talkative, who surprisingly said to be the eldest son of thirteen siblings.

Inferring from the palace and his attire, the predecessor of Turm who bought the court rank seemed to be a capable person.

A luncheon was held in the hall of the Water Palace, and it was a place for socializing.

To attend the launching ceremony, aristocrats who came from neighboring aristocracy such as Ignitia were gathering.

The luncheon itself was a casual event, the nobles were making groups and talking with each other there.

I greeted a few people with Otou-sama while searching for the person I had in mind.

(Yup, there he is.)

Long red hair, dark green eyes, with sturdily large build.

In addition to typical north-western characteristics, he had a mildly baby face and somewhat nervous atmosphere.

When the man saw Otou-sama, he waved his hand and came close to him.

Somewhat similar to the appearance when an introverted type of person found a few acquaintances among the people he met for the first time.

(He closely resembled Harold. His personality seems to be quite different, though.)

He was the current Earl of Nibelheim, Harold II.

The third scenario's capture target, Harold Nibelheim III's father.

"I am honored to meet you here, Duke Aurelia!"

"I heard many things about you, Earl Nibelheim."

"No, no, no, I and the others are not a match for you.

Your '*Refining by the Spirit of Lightning*' based on Hafan's spirit theory!

That's what I called innovation!

I always thought that I want to talk about this theory if I saw you."

As soon as he greeted Otou-sama, Earl Nibelheim shook his hand.

As soon as Otou-sama replied, he began to develop professional talks on metallurgical alchemy as quickly as possible.

Based on what I had learned in Aurelia, the finances of the Nibelheim territory should be stable.

Nibelheim territory of his ruling was a rich land with a long history.

Located in the coastal part of the tributary of the Varnalis River, there was an industrial zone and the mountains had mines in it.

Their specialty products were high-quality silver and beautiful silverwares that were produced from the processed silver.

About ten years ago, it seemed that the silver ore had withered at once.

However, Harold II developed a new refining technology.

It seemed that Nibelheim's industry, which was on the verge of financial collapse, had a miraculous V-shaped recovery.

Earl Nibelheim's tirade had just changed into a talk about his new refining technology.

It was a method of separating any impurities contained in low-quality silver by smelting.

Application of Otou-sama's technology would improve the refining efficiency not only in the silver industry, but also across the continent by a few percent.

Even though there were many technical terms, I managed to understand them somehow.

After the end of the tirade by Earl Nibelheim, finally his eyes met mine.

"Ah... I apologize, your daughter is with you too. I have been rude."

"Yes. Erica, give your greetings."

"I am honored to meet you, Earl Nibelheim. Please don't be concerned about that."

When Earl Nibelheim got a hold of himself, I pinched my skirt and greeted him.

He had the ability to concentrate and was full of enthusiasm.

He was an excellent alchemist with a researcher's mind, and his ability to solve problems was high from his background.

However, he had problems in attention.

Instead of being easily immersed in things he had interested in, he gave me the impression that he had a narrow field of view.

Even if that was excellent for an alchemist, that might be fatal for a nobleman.

Because of that weakness, from a cunning scammer, his territory would seem like a fat defenseless duck.

After all his efforts to make his hometown flourished, in the end he was deceived and

fell into ruins, what a cruel story.

Earl Nibelheim moved to other influential people after a light chat.

“He is very enthusiastic about research, huh.

He was doing a research on Otou-sama and Onii-sama’s theory.”

“Aah, he is a very good alchemist.”

While talking to Otou-sama, he brought out the information about Nibelheim.

Their economic situation and relations with the neighboring nobility and others were good.

It seemed that the fraud case hadn’t occurred yet from my roundabout investigation.

This was the most valuable information.

I quietly took a breath.

If I struck right now, I might be able to break the destruction flag of Nibelheim family.

After the luncheon party, Otou-sama and I returned to our guest rooms.

After taking a small break, if it was as originally scheduled, there would be inspection and talks.

Until the launching ceremony begins, newly arrived nobles would be added to the roster, and a similar schedule would continue every day.

Originally, I only needed to smile beside my father.

I quickly took off the dress and changed to a dark blue costume with a cape like what a town girl would wear in autumn.

When Palug in her kitten form crawled under the dress, in the next moment she stood up looking exactly like me.

“Well then, I will leave it to you. Palug.”

“Ufufu, I’ll act like a noble lady more than you, Erica.”

“Please do it in moderation. Don’t do funny things without my knowledge, okay?”

“Joking, joking. I will behave like a meek doll.”

Palug laughed pleasantly.

Since she was inherently mischievous, there was some anxiety, but well, I trusted her.

After I waved to Palug, I leaned my body forward from the window.

Tirnanog who was already waiting on the other side of the window immediately caught me.

Tirnanog leaped and we landed in the garden of the Water Palace.

Now then, it was the beginning of the investigation.

Chapter 57

City of Canals (4)

The passers-by who passed us were looking back with a glance.
Their line of sights was pointed towards the black figure walking next to me.

Both the mantle and the gloves were black.
Moreover, his face was wrapped around with a cloth like a bandage.
Thick and long arms, an extraordinarily wide shoulders.
Somewhat stooping attitude, awkward footsteps.
That giant looked like the monster that seemed to come out in a classic mystery novel.

On his left hand was a slightly larger alchemists' bag.
His right hand was holding my hand.
A familiar voice echoed from the side covered by bandages.

[Aren't we becoming more conspicuous like this, Erica?]
"Still, it should be better than the original figure."

Towards my reply, Tirnanog groaned and I thought carefully.
This time, he used the deformation mechanism of the star steel armor and disguised himself as a human being.
Extended his limbs by enlargement, kept upright posture, shortened the length of his tail and neck.
At the last moment when the silhouette looked like a human being, she hid the armor with bandages and mantle.
At least, with this he didn't look like a homunculus.

The purpose of this disguise was to have a role of a guardian.
If I had an adult with me, I might be able to smoothly negotiate rather than if I went

alone as a child.

Also, since the disguised Tirnanog looked very scary, most of the troubles could be avoided.

“Look, some people have similar appearances with you.”

[Umu. When you say so, that’s true.]

Looking around, we could see someone who covered their armor-like limbs with clothing and bandages like Tirnanog.

Many of them were dressed as miners, sailors, soldiers, and so on.

They were wearing prosthetic limbs that were diverted from golem technique to replace their limbs that were lost in an accident or war.

It was an expensive high-performance artificial limb unique to alchemy.

Tirnanog would be seen as a person who had experienced a fierce battle or a major accident.

[Now, daughter. Where should we go first?]

“Dad, I want to repair and charge the wands. Let’s head to <Crucible Street>.”

With a parent-child roleplay in between, we aimed towards our destination.

We took a horse-drawn cab instead boarding the small boat at the boat boarding area, and got off at the alchemy area, Crucible Street of the Town of All Kinds of Goods.

Specialty stores such as materials for alchemy and finished wands were lining up.

The name of the store of our destination was Tulum Wand Store.

It was the store that my friend that I made during the Spring Festival, Tricia, had recommended to me.

From its name, it was likely to be a family store of the famous Tulum family.

It seemed that they not only sell, repair, and charge wands, but also create custom-made wands.

This time, due to the limited money we had in hand, we would only repair and charge the wands as planned.

Beautiful signboards made with brass and white tin were lining up at the shop front facing the street.

It seemed that there was an arrangement to set up a signboard related to handled goods in Town of All Kinds of Goods.

Crystal and pickaxe for the ore stores.

Unicorn and others for the magical beast material stores.

Material stores for potions had a lily of the valley in front of it.

And of course, the wand stores had the design of a wand.

In addition to basic designs, some shops sometimes combined symbols representing the origin of their own houses.

For example, Turm's family stores had a moon and a tower on it.

The moon represented their ancestors who came from Hafan's mages, and the tower represented the origin of their house's name¹.

[Ooh, Erica. Isn't it here?]

I looked up at the signboard in front of the store pointed by Tirnanog.

A tower made of white tin in an oval crescent made of brass.

On top of the tower were two crossed brass wands.

Apparently, it seemed that we could arrive at our destination without any trouble.

The shop was small, but it was made of fine quality stones and looked nice.

Since the door was open, it should be open, but there were no shoe marks in the mat in front of the store, indicating that there were only few visitors.

It was supposed to be a recommended shop, what a strange store.

When Tirnanog and I were observing about the state in front of the store, loud voices came from the inside.

"...What was that?"

[It seems like a fight or an argument.]

We hid the sound of our footsteps somehow and sneaked into the store without anyone noticing us.

Sure enough, I couldn't see any customer.

Was this a small scale shop that wasn't very popular?

When I thought so and looked again, everything was a product that seemed to be valuable.

The quality of the wands that were decorating the inside was also good.

As expected of the Turm's company.

There were only an old man and a boy inside the store.

The shopkeeper and his grandson?

Apart from those two people, I couldn't see the clerk.

The boy had a burning red short hair.

With large almond-shaped, intense dark green eyes.

He was wearing a dark green outerwear that matched the color of his eyes perfectly.

He was about 5 cm shorter than my height.

He had a youthful face that was appropriate for his age.

The old man was balding and the remnant of his hair was pure white.

Sharp eyes behind the eyeglasses, deep wrinkles carved between his eyebrows.

He was a hard-hearted and obstinate old man.

The good quality silk shirt he had on was another top-quality woollen fabric that was likely to be the best.

The worn arm cover indicate that he was a craftsman.

"Master, this design, why not!"

"Harry, your wand is outstanding, but the safety is too low. It cannot be on sale."

"It's because you are this hard-headed that your real son ran away, Master!"

"This and that are different stories!"

The old man and the boy kept on arguing without noticing us.
I exchanged looks with Tirnanog.

[Teacher and student disagreement, huh.]

“We heard the family situation of others that we shouldn’t listen to.
We shouldn’t bother them, shall we go out before they noticed us, Tir?”
[Umu, we will visit again later, or we should go to a different shop.]

The redheaded boy and the balding old man who were in a disagreement turned around at the same time.
Uh, they noticed us.

“Welcome to Turm Wand Store!!”
“Welcome, are you here to repair your wands?”

The boy went into the entrance side quickly and spread both hands.
It might be a welcome pose, but it also seemed to be a gesture to not let his prey escaped.
The old man went towards us swiftly as we could no longer move anywhere.
It was a breathtaking collaboration even though they had been fighting until a moment ago.

“Customers, we have good wands at the ready!”
“...This, Harry. These people came to repair their wands.”

Somehow the old man knew our requirement here.
I pulled the mantle of Tirnanog and urged him to reply.

[Aah, even without me saying it, it seems that you are quick to understand.
We want to repair and charge our wands. Can you do it?]
“First of all, please sit down and relax. The business negotiations will be after that.

Harry, tea for our customers. In the back of the cupboard, with the seal of firebirds on it.”

“Yes, Master. The most expensive tea, right away.”

To Tirnanog who was showing the bag, the old shop owner recommended him to sit on the sofa.

We sat as we were told.

The atmosphere of the old man switched to a sort of professional specific one.

I felt like we wouldn't have any problem even if I left the negotiations to him.

[First of all, can we estimate the price?]

“Yes, I don't mind.”

[Well then.]

Tirnanog opened the bag and spread the damaged wands and the empty wands on the table.

The old man opened his eyes wide and picked up one of them.

“Hou... this, this is a rare wand...”

After the old man placed the pince-nez glasses on the table, he took out a magnifying glass and examined it.

The facial expression of the old man changed and he seemed to be having fun.

It was a very good craftsman's atmosphere.

“Customers, please come here. My Master will not move for a while when this happens.”

“Thank you very much.”

A teaware was prepared on a different table by the redheaded boy.

As Tirnanog declined with a hand gesture, I decided to accept it gratefully after putting Tirnanog in charge of the matter.

The redheaded boy winked while handing the tea poured into the porcelain cup.

“Are you traveling from the Aurelia Ducal neighbourhood?”

“Yes, that’s correct. I wonder if it is so easy to recognize.”

I felt curious as I had made sure that my clothing didn’t have any coat of arms on it.

“It’s because your shoe soles are the ones that noble people related to Aurelia would wear.

Thanks to the welt and the rugged leather from adult cow, the shoe soles don’t absorb water.”

The boy told me and I looked at my feet.

I didn’t know that soles were so distinctive that the identity of the wearer could be known.

“That’s amazing. I didn’t know that shoes can show people’s birthplace.”

The boy rubbed under his nose with his index finger while grinning shyly.

He was proud, but he seemed to be slightly embarrassed.

“Besides that, the noblemen from royal territory of Ignitia use expensive cordovan for their shoes.

Hafan’s noblemen use elegant shoes using soft calf leather.

Fleece on the backside of their shoes is the characteristic of the whole area of Lucanrant.”

I see, clothing would change due to cultural differences.

This boy seemed to see the world in much detail.

“Even though you look the same age as me, you know better than I am.”

“Um, I just turned 8 years old last month.”

“Oh my, you really are the same age as myself. You are a studious person.”

“No, no, those are the knowledge I got from my Master.

In fact, I shouldn't reveal all of my cards, that was my mistake.

Ah, never mind, just drink. This one is superb."

Somehow I felt that his wording became more relaxed.

Because he knew that we were about the same age, his natural way of talking came out, huh.

I tried the cup of tea while enjoying the refreshing scent.

It had fruit-like astringency with mild sweetness.

While tilting the cup, I kept chatting.

"Are you his grandchild?"

"No, I'm just hanging out in Master's shop. If I have to say it, I guess I'm his disciple."

"You can call me Erica. Is it fine if I call you Harry?"

"Aah, just Harold is fine. That's my real name."

Saying so, he showed his protruding tooth as he grinned.

Oh?

That was similar to the capture target of the third scenario.

No way he would be in a place like this though.

Besides, he was too short for Harold Nibelheim, and his character was too cheerful.

I wondered if there were many people with the same names in the Northwest area.

"Why is Harold hanging out in this shop?"

"I like to make wands.

I was forbidden by my father to make it, but Master allowed me to make it quietly."

It seemed that he liked to make wands, somehow he had a disposition like Onii-sama.

However, it was tough that he was forbidden by his parents.

"Then I wonder why the argument became so heated that it could be heard from the

outside of the shop.”

“Uehh~, you heard that?”

“Yes.”

“Because I cannot use wands, I wanted to ask for a trial shoot instead.

I was told that it wasn’t possible because I didn’t think about the recoil properly.”

“Even if you wear the alchemists’ gloves, you can’t use wands?”

“Aah, I have a constitution that is more susceptible to the recoiling reaction of a wand than other people.”

The advantage of wands was ‘everyone can use it as long as it has been charged’.

I was surprised that some people couldn’t use wands.

Some people suffered from an unexpected constitution in this world.

I had a constitution that I couldn’t make wands even if I could use wands, I felt a little close with him.

“If you like, shall I try?”

“Eh, is that fine? It’s dangerous, you know?”

“I cannot create a wand, so I had plenty of exercise in using wands.”

“Heeh, that’s tough. So there is a constitution like that, huh~”

Harold glanced at the other table.

I also looked in that direction.

The shop owner was still studying the wands eagerly.

Surprisingly, it seemed that the old man and Tirnanog were chatting excitedly.

“It seems that your guardian and Master will still take some time.

There are my workshop and the test site nearby, but are you sure you want to go there?”

“Nearby?”

“Yeah, it’s over here.”

Harold drank his own tea in one breath and walked towards the back of the store.
I also hurriedly placed the cup down, got off the chair and followed Harold.

¹ Turm means tower in Deutsch.

Chapter 58

City of Canals (5)

TL note:

***Harvan** will be **Hafan**, said that it came from Welsh which means 'haven' or 'shelter'.*

***Leandez** will be **Lindis**, it came from Lindisfarne Gospel.*

With Harold's lead, I went into the back of the store.

We passed through the backyard of accumulated wands and classified materials into the space for living.

When I looked carefully around the dim room, like inside the store, I noticed that strangely expensive items were stored.

Especially, the eight porcelain dishes decorating the wall.

After reincarnating, I could count the time I saw porcelain with one hand.

In Spring Palace, there was an old pot that seemed to have been purchased on the behalf of grandpa, but it was stored away except when inspecting and cleaning it.

Of course, never mind using it, people would hesitate to decorate their place with it, since porcelain in this world was very expensive.

The technique to make porcelain was now lost.

All the existing porcelain was made when there was a great empire that once spread over Karkinos and Ichthyes.

Those porcelains were made on the far away eastern continent and was brought in by trade by the empire.

Since the trade with the eastern continent had discontinued completely, there was no way to obtain a new porcelain.

On the contrary, it seemed that it was uncertain whether the technique for making porcelain still exists on the eastern continent.

Attempts to reproduce the manufacture of porcelain seemed to have been done many times.

A while ago, a nobleman of Ignitia confined a promising alchemist until he managed to produce a white porcelain.

However, never mind completing the porcelain, no one had seen the appearance of the alchemist ever again.

That was the rumor.

The dishes displayed here were drawn with detailed drawings and a flashy color, all eight pieces were gorgeous artworks.

Given the value of the porcelain itself, one piece could probably be exchanged with a small castle.

As expected from the wealthy merchant Turm, even in the corner of such of a small shop, there were ridiculously valuable things lurking around.

“Ara? But this...”

“Oya, you have discerning eyes. Does it worry you?”

One of them seemed to be a repaired dish that had broken once.

“I’m sure, this technique to seam it with lacquer and hide the crack with gold leaf... it’s golden joinery.”

“Heeh~, Erica is also knowledgeable, huh.”

“It’s just something I heard once.”

Since it was something I had known in my previous life, I couldn’t boast that much.

Because of the golden joinery, the design wasn’t really clear.

Considering the barely discernible designs of horns and hoofs, it might be a drawing of an auspicious beast.

“My Master seems to like it, too.

Sometimes he will stare at it until he forgets about time.”

I nodded.

Perfect beautiful goods were not bad either, but dishes that once broken and repaired had unique beauty.

In spite of myself, I also lost my words and stared at it.

“Oops, my bad.

We almost arrived at our destination, over here.”

Harold pointed at a solid mahogany door.

He took out a sparkling key from his pocket, inserted it in the keyhole and turned it.

“Yosh...”

When he opened the door, a cluttered large room appeared.

There were four long tables in the center of the room.

On the table were a glass bottle filled with complicated labware such as various reagents and specimens, and a small blackboard with calculation formula on it.

And then, many sheets of vellum papers and scraps spilled over and fell from the table.

There were hundreds of medicinal herbs hanging from the ceiling beam.

Similar doors were built on each side of the room.

There was a cabinet on the wall by the doors, and boxes of alchemy materials were packed tightly.

In the corner of the room were stacked herbal bags, empty bottles in cases, wooden boxes with tags on them, etc.

Unlike my brother’s Wunderkammer, it was a lot messier but it had a familiar atmosphere.

“Is this your Wunderkammer?”

“Yeah, I owe it to my Master. As expected from a person of Aurelia Ducal to recognize it at a glance.”

“My brother also had a Wunderkammer like this.”

“This room is connected to another room, wait a moment.”

Harold said so and pulled out another key.

It seemed that this room was a multiple space transfer facility.

That old man who had something like this, and Harold who was entrusted with it, were not ordinary people.

It was too expensive to be handed over to a child who was entering and leaving the wand store.

I followed Harold around bypassing the room in a roundabout way so as not to step on the bottled preserved specimens or ink bottles.

Suddenly, my eyes fixated on the desk where many books were stacked.

The cover of the top notebook was turned up.

For no particular reason, I read the letters written there.

Harold Nibelheim's Research Journal—

(Eeh!? Why is there a son of the Earl in a place like this!)

I became confused by the sudden appearance of a capture target.

This was lucky, but my heart wasn't prepared.

Even though we had planned on the premise that we wouldn't meet the capture target this time.

(But, if he is the son of the Earl, then it isn't weird for him to have such a luxurious facility...)

I didn't recognize Harold's appearance because he was significantly different from how he was six years later, but there were many parts that were the same if I thought about it now.

Both Harolds had a protruding tooth, and the shades of their hair and eyes were familiar.

He would become the six-years-later-Harold that I knew of when he grew taller, grew his hair, and became wilder after his life was ruined.

Well, about the last one, I didn't want such a lively child to experience something like that.

"You should be able to shoot the wand here."

The second door was connected to a room that was as big as a small gymnasium.

The ceiling was two stories high, and the walls seemed sturdy.

On the wall across the entrance, sandbags were stacked up to three times the height of average adults.

The characteristic was at our feet, where soil was spread evenly all over the room.

"How amazing. Is this Harold's work?"

"In truth, it seems that Master made this room for his youngest son.

But now that he had ran away, Master lent this room to me.

Even though his father works with wands, that guy doesn't like the idea of it, what a waste—"

It was the family circumstances that I had heard earlier, huh.

I recalled the grim face of the old shopkeeper.

It seemed that there were many circumstances in this seemingly successful family.

"Now then, I have to prepare it.

Please wait as I prepare the target."

Harold shouted happily and kneeled on the ground.

Before I knew it, he was taking off his coat and wore a work apron.

He also wore goggles on his forehead and a tool holder around his waist.

He changed into a craftsman outfit and wrote something on the ground with an athame knife, not minding that he dirtied his outfit by doing so.

"Is that a golem? So you can make it even without the core part."

“You understand that too, huh. Then this will be quick.”

Harold was making a basic golem that could at least walk.

He finished engraving the letters and breathed out at the end.

The breathed out magical power became blessing, and the golem began to move as if imitating God’s work.

The golem that got up was about 3 meters high.

It was like a fat person without a neck.

Twelve golems got up one after another and they walked to the point where they were ordered to go.

Six of the golems lined up in a similar formation like bowling pins, while the rest of them seemed to be waiting on either side of the room.

“Alright, Erica. First off, the Wand of Gust.”

I received the first wand from Harold.

It seemed that the distribution of the material was somewhat different from the Gust of Onii-sama.

It had old characters of northwest area which were inscribed directly on the wand, and I couldn’t read the content.

“This is... isn’t it a little too heavy?”

“Nope, it was made like that to raise the output, you can try it.”

The wind produced by this Wand of Gust was adjusted to blow objects about 10 meters away.

However, that was only based on human size.

It seemed that the golems were weighed at least 1 ton each.

...This, wouldn’t it be impossible to blow them away?

“Brace your legs firmly.

This wand still hasn’t been checked for the balance of its recoil.”

Before I knew it, Harold was about 5 meters away from me.

“Can you tell me about the recoiling reaction in more detail?”

“No, no, no, I’m certain that it’s absolutely safe.”

“If it’s absolutely safe, I think you should watch over from behind me instead from over there.”

“Nope~, that is...”

“If you are nearby, won’t you be able to get better data?”

“Uh...”

When I was smiling sweetly, Harold went behind me with a groan.

With this, he would become a cushion even if I collapsed.

Even if something happened, it would happen to both of us.

Well, I didn’t want anything to happen though.

I stared at my favorite alchemists’ silk gloves.

I would believe in the performance of these gloves that Eduart-oniisama had gave me.

I pointed Harold’s wand towards the golem standing in the front.

“Blow—”

The moment I waved the wand, a mass of air exploded at such a pressure that I couldn’t open my eyes.

When the whirlwind hit the golems directly, they were blown off their feet.

The six golems were blown by Gust and crashed into the sandbags placed on the opposite wall while spinning.

A deafening sound roared.

The golems who seemed to have their emeth characters damaged by the impact, broke into pieces and returned into lumps of soil.

“—away?”

“Oooohhhh!!!”

Harold’s delighted cheers could be heard.

Eh? This, was this truly Gust?

It looked more like an amazing offensive wand.

“I did it~~, it was as calculated!

I thought it would give out this much power unless I thought about the recoiling reaction.”

“Recoil... indeed if you don’t restrain the recoiling reaction of a wand of this class, it will be too dangerous to sell for personal use.”

“Ueh~, Erica also has the same opinion as Master?

I finally got somebody to trial shoot this wand, and it gave out the output as I wanted it to, so I’m quite satisfied with this.”

Eduart-oniisama’s gloves almost completely alleviated the recoil, so this time I came out fine.

Not everyone had a cheat item made by Onii-sama.

The reputation of this store would be affected if he was untactful.

This was something that Harold’s Master had admonished him for.

However, it might be excellent like this.

For me who could use Onii-sama’s gloves, it was just a powerful wand.

Since there was no ounce of elegance in it, I would have to close my eyes on occasion.

Also, I would like to emphasize on smaller rotation and make its power more within common sense.

“Even so, there wasn’t any recoil.

How strange... I should have added more...”

“More what?”

“No, no, don’t mind me.”

Harold averted his eyes unnaturally.

How suspicious.

“Ah, speaking of which, you were staring at those gloves earlier.

By any chance, were they custom made?”

“Yes, these are the works of a genius alchemist.”

“How nice. I mean, I want one too.”

Speaking of which, he said that he had a constitution that was more susceptible to the recoiling reaction.

If he wore something that prevents recoil, he should be able to use wands.

Because he loved wands so much, perhaps he wanted to use one himself.

I took off my gloves and offered them to Harold.

“Would you like to try it once as well?”

“Well, I guess. I think if it’s just for a little while, I can do it.

I, I made a great mistake when I was a kid.

Both my father and Master told me that I will never be able to use wands... but...”

While hesitating, Harold reached out for my gloves.

“If these gloves, me too, surely—”

With an excited look, Harold wore my gloves.

The hands of the small boy seemed to fit perfectly with my gloves.

Harold held the Wand of Gust and made the remaining golem to line up in a formation.

“...Yosh, I will blow away the rest of the golems!”

Harold put a serious expression as he put on his goggles.

Aiming carefully, he glared at the foremost golem as he held the wand aloft.

“Blow—”

At the next moment, Harold’s figure disappeared.

Only the sparkling magic circle formed by the wand remained on the spot, and it slowly collapsed and disappeared.

The golems were standing on the other side of the room as if nothing had happened.

An unpleasant sound as if something broke could be heard from behind.

(Eeehh~~~!?)

I panicked for a moment, but I managed to recover.

In retrospect, I saw the broken door barely hung by its hinges and was swaying.

I turned back to the storeroom half-running.

“Harold?!”

When I opened the door and stepped in, the broken door fell from its hinges.

Inside was in an amazing state.

It was as if a storm had gone by—no, a storm *did* pass by.

Two legs were sticking out from the stacks of herbal bags in the corner of the room.

Those sturdy boots should have been Harold’s.

“Are you alright? Still alive?”

“O, ow-ow-ow, it huuurts... I, I’m still alive, but... it’s painful everywhere...”

I pulled Harold out from beneath the herbal bags.

Shaking his head like what a soaked dog would do, the dried herbs were scattering everywhere.

It seemed that there was no big injury.

It seemed that the herbal bags became a cushion and he was saved because of that.

“N-no~, I’m glad that I didn’t clean up these herbal bags.

Aah, mou, that wasn’t cool of me—”

“I’m very sorry. I didn’t know that it’s going to be like that.”

“No, no, it’s fine. It’s because of Erica’s gloves that I got away with only this degree of pain.

This is why my constitution is awful.”

“But—”

Harold stopped me who was still trying to apologize.

“It’s my fate. It cannot be helped.”

Harold made a smile and said so.

However, a sad atmosphere seeped out in his expression and attitude.

At that time, a noise sounded suddenly.

In addition to the sounds of moving objects, there was a sound of rustling clothes.

I picked up the Wand of Gust dropped by Harold and aimed it towards that person.

“...Who are you?”

“Who is it? Is anyone there?”

What appeared from behind the door was a redheaded youth in a brand new dress suit.

“Well, that’s supposed to be my line. Little boy and little girl.”

Chapter 59

City of Canals (6)

“Good grief, what a scary Ojou-san.

I’m not a suspicious person. I’m the owner of this room.”

I observed him while still pointing the wand towards him, the redheaded young man drew back as he raised his hands.

Certainly if I looked closely, he had a face that looked exactly like the owner of Turm Wand Store.

If I thought about it, this room had a structure that made it impossible for suspicious people to trespass it.

When I lowered the wand, the young man smiled and went further into the room.

“Aa~h, what a mess.”

“W-who are you!? How did you come into this room!”

“Calm down, Harold-botchan. I will not bite you.”

The young man set a chair that was toppling sideways and sat on it.

Harold who was panicking didn’t seem to hear the young man’s words.

“As this person said earlier, he is the owner of this room.

So, I guess he must have a key to this room.”

“That Ojou-san has a good judgment.”

The young man said so as if it was amusing and crossed his legs.

The radiance from his cordovan-made shoes entered my eyes.

He was wearing a dark gray dress suit made of silk that had a glossy feeling.

A silky cravat with milky color on his neck.

He didn't have any other decorative items that would distinguish him.

It was surprising that he didn't have a wand on him even though he was the son of the owner of a wand store.

He was about the same age as Eduart-oniisama.

He appeared to be in his early twenties.

A high nose with a large forehead, thin lips that seemed arrogant.

It seemed that he was acting like a frivolous person so that we couldn't discern his thoughts.

While watching those sharp green eyes, I picked up such an impression.

The young man was surprised and looked around the cluttered storeroom.

"But, it has been a while since I came home, huh."

"You, are you perhaps the youngest son of Master, um, what did he say your name again!?"

"It's Gilbert."

"That's right, Gilbert!

You should see Master.

He was worried that you were dying by the roadside somewhere—"

"Oops, stop right there.

Do not thrust your neck further into my family's matter."

Gilbert intentionally stopped Harold with a low voice.

Harold was surprised and drew his body back with a start.

"Due to various special circumstances, it's hard for me to show my face to my old man. Leave me alone. When the time comes, I will see him voluntarily.

Until then, it's a secret to my old man that I am here. Understand?"

Gilbert had an amiable smile on his face, but his sharp tone of voice made us unable to refuse him.

“More than that, how terrible, Harold-botchan.

Have you measure your constitution properly?”

“Constitution... I know that I am vulnerable to the recoiling reaction of the wands.

I don't quite understand it, but generally speaking it's dangerous, right?”

Harold patted his apron with a sullen expression.

Dry chamomile flowers scattered everywhere.

It seemed that he got angry as the matter about his worrying constitution was poked repeatedly.

“I apologize that your room has become like this.

I forced him to use a wand.”

“No, well, I didn't mean it in that sense though.

Now then, where did I put it...”

When I apologized, Gilbert shrugged his shoulders with a baffled expression.

He stood up and searched through the shelves packed with various things.

“I'm not planning to nag about the failure of a child who hasn't even reach 10 years old.

However, recently the inhibitory substances have advanced, and it is said that it would be safe if he wore gloves—

Oh, found it. Here, it's this thing.”

Gilbert threw a rod-shaped object familiar to a wand to Harold.

That stick drew a gentle arc and fell into Harold's hand.

It was a handle-like tool with star crystals attached on it.

Although it was too short as a wand, it had a similar structure.

Some of the crystals were floating in the star-shaped star steel.

In response to the surrounding magical power, the crystal was emitting a light blue

light.

“Try it.”

“Even if you say to try it...

This is too short for a wand and it used coatings that I have never seen before as lighting.

This, what is this?”

“Ooh~, it’s a generation gap, huh.

When I was small, everyone was measuring their inhibition value with this thing.”

Gilbert covered his face exaggeratingly.

“Remove your gloves, try to gently release your internal magical powers.”

“Internal...?”

“If you don’t understand, well. Just try to do it somehow.”

Harold gripped the handle with his bare hand as Gilbert said.

When he closed his eyes and put some effort into his hands, the star crystal shone white.

The light gathered thinly and spun like threads around Harold’s fist.

(Eh... why is it white? The light of the star crystal is supposed to be blue, right?)

“Thus, depending on the amount and composition of the inhibitor, it is a substitute for expressing each person’s inhibitory ability as a numerical value.

The measured inhibition value appears as the number of the seven prismatic colors of a rainbow.

Therefore, the alchemists call this crystal a <Rainbow Strap>.”

“Eh, but it’s white? It’s not the color of a rainbow at all though?”

“Wait, wait, I’m also surprised because it was unexpected.”

Harold who placed the Rainbow Strap on the table shook Gilbert’s shoulders.

Just to be sure, Gilbert himself also grasped the Rainbow Strap.
Three rainbow-colored bands were generated from the crystal.
It didn't appear to be broken.

Waiting for Harold to calm down, Gilbert opened his mouth again.

"I've heard of it, but this is my first time seeing the real thing.
Of all things, it's a miraculous constitution.
If Botchan wants to become a creator of magic tools, you have the best qualification."
"What do you mean?"
"Well, if I explain it in detail, it will take time.
...Do I have to tell you?"

Gilbert seemed to feel troubled and turned his eyes towards the other way.
But it seemed that his eyes were laughing.

"To say something like that, isn't it too cruel.
If you tell me, I will honor you as my second Master."
"Hmm~, I will tell you since you have said that much.
But I want to be called 'Aniki' rather than 'Master'."
"...Gilbert-aniki!"

Harold desperately clung to Gilbert who seemed to be enjoying himself.
Gilbert was also at fault.
If such thing was told, of course Harold would be anxious about the explanation.

"'Aniki', huh. That sounds good~. Alright, my younger brother Harold-kun."
"That's right, Aniki!"

Every time Harold called him 'Aniki', Gilbert seemed to be happy.
Speaking of which, he did say that he was the youngest son.

“By the way, I feel thirsty~.

I want to moisten my throat before the long explanation~.”

“There is the treasured natural foaming mineral water with cider in this place! Do you want to drink it, Aniki!”

“Oh, that’s great, I can drink cider.”

Harold took out two bottles from somewhere.

He pulled out the stopper deftly according to Gilbert’s order and served it with the porcelain pot taken from this place again.

“Aah, but, I’m also hungry~.

If I’m going to use my head, I will need sweets~.”

“There are lightly spiced baked sweets in this place! Eat them, Aniki!”

“Wah~, how nostalgic. Aren’t they from Gizella-obachan’s shop? How is she doing?”

“Oba-chan is as healthy as ever. Come and meet her later.”

Gilbert looked at the baked snacks taken out by Harold and narrowed his eyes in nostalgia.

When he was like this, I couldn’t see the scary first impression at all.

Not only Gilbert heaved up the materials, but he also shared the baked sweets and mineral water with Harold and me.

Well, they were originally from Harold, so he didn’t actually share anything.

The sweets were cut into simple human figures.

They looked like ginger cookies I ate during Christmas.

The lightly spiced baked dough melted on my tongue when I bit into it.

Among the gentle sweetness, there were plenty of spices such as cinnamon and ginger.

“Ha~, I’m revived!

Now then, it can’t be helped since you have done that much for me.

Gilbert-sensei's magic course, let's start from the beginning."

Gilbert prompted applause by clapping his hands.

Harold obediently applauded following his big brother.

In this way, I also got Gilbert's lecture as Harold's plus one.

Chapter 60

City of Canals (7)

“Well, you don’t know about internal magical power yet.
Then we must start from the very beginning.”

When Gilbert breathed on the blackboard that he took out from the back of the shelf, dust whirled up.

He had a small coughing fit because of that.

The teacher had a comical behavior, but we tried to listen seriously.

Harold even had a chalk and a small blackboard in his hands.

“Unusual power, supernatural power, supernatural ability... do you know this?
They are all blood-dependent power.”

“Is it like the telepathic power of Ignitia?”

“Oh, you’re well-informed, Ojou-san. That’s right, it’s like the power of Ignitia.”

Gilbert drew illustrations of human-like figures on the blackboard using chalk.

They seemed like a knight in armor and a deformed fur-wearing warrior.

Perhaps because he was a craftsman, he could draw a good picture casually.

“One of the famous supernatural abilities on this continent, as Ojou-san said, the telepathic power of the country of dragon knights.

The other one is the country of healers and swordsmen, and the bio-enhancement accompanying them.

It will be rare for you to meet the abilities of other continents, so for the time being, these are the two you will often see.”

After Gilbert erased the illustrations of the knight and the warrior, he drew a simpler human figure.

The round feeling was similar to the ginger cookies I ate earlier.

“The unusual powers that can be used by ethnic groups and individuals are diverse.

The scholars who tried to systematize them had thrown the towel.

What realizes these mysterious abilities is the magical power inside living beings and the biological circuit that we were born with.”

Gilbert drew a spiral pattern like a whirlpool inside the human figure and a lightning bolt mark on the outside.

He added notes that the whirlpool pattern was the biological circuit and the lightning bolt mark was the unusual power.

“The unusual power that human beings can perform usually manifested by using the internal magical power.

To determine its degree of strength, we have to look at the amount of internal magical power and the quality of the biological circuit.

This is greatly affected by the bloodline.”

A line like a staircase was drawn at the foot of the human figure.

He added an unlabeled human figure who was hanging his head dejectedly below the staircase which had the human figure with the whirlpool mark attached.

“Therefore, humans who are inferior in the amount of internal magical power generation and quality of biological circuit absolutely couldn’t win against superior people.

It’s absolutely frustrating.

Efforts, wisdom, and ingenuity are in vain in the face of people naturally blessed.”

Next to the human figure with the whirlpool inside, Gilbert added two new human figures.

“There are two ways to eliminate this inequality. Hafan’s magic and Aurelia’s alchemy.”

Gilbert had one of the new human figures to hold a staff.

It was the same mage-style as the one Klaus and Actorius-sensei had.

“Hafan’s people were generally inferior in internal magical power generation and biological circuit’s quality.

However, to make up for being weak, these guys are excellent in creative power.

Instead of touching the finite internal magical power inside their body, they turned their sight toward the infinite force drifting in the physical world—the external magical power.”

That said, Gilbert drew an arrow from above the head of the mage over to his abdomen.

Furthermore, he drew a whirlpool around the tip of the arrow.

“Hafan’s mages first capture external magical power and convert it into easy-to-process internal magical power.

But this alone merely taking infinite magical power into poor biological circuits.

Which is why the mages made a small twist.

This is just a sample that mimics it, but have you seen it?”

Gilbert spread vellum papers with complex figures and characters on the table.

Ah, I had seen this.

Klaus was holding lots of it.

“Spell cards, huh.”

“That’s right, it’s a spell card. Spell cards, chants, or both are used as components and a magic circle is built to make their magical power performs unusual power outside their body.

Hafan’s mages can combine a number of components to freely generate the desired dynamics.”

“So the magic circle is equivalent to the biological circuit mentioned in the capabilities of other ethnics.”

“Yeah, you understand the gist of it with no problem. Such excellent pupils, teacher is happy.”

Gilbert drew a few small squares around staff on the illustration and put a big lightning bolt mark on it.

“With the development of magic, people are not affected by their birthplace, and they can use unusual power as long as they make efforts for it.

However, this external magical power is a tricky thing, unless it is converted into internal magical power, it cannot be used in biological circuit.

Moreover, the magical power conversion ability that human beings inherently have is insignificant.”

Gilbert poked around the mage figure’s stomach with the tip of the chalk.

“Mages train their conversion ability over time to close the gap.

There is no curtain of talent here. It’s a world of pure effort and guts.

At the beginning, one will only be able to convert truly insignificant amount of external power over hours of training, but over the years and decades it would be possible to convert a lot of magical power.

Therefore, there is a *possibility* that everyone can use magic, but not just everyone can use it. You need a strong belief.”

Finishing his words, Gilbert made a wand in the hand of the fourth human figure.

Finally, it was the appearance of an alchemist.

“The last one that appeared was the Visitor’s Clan who came from the other side of the sea.

They took a totally different approach to external magical power.

...Or more precisely, in the first place, only the circumstances of alchemy that were different in the history.”

Gilbert drew a picture like a big pot next to the alchemist figure.

“Aniki. Is that the alchemy furnace, athanor¹?”

“Athanor, huh... I haven’t seen the real thing.”

“Well, if you go to some school you may touch something similar in the classroom. After that, if you are on a battleship campaign like a scholarship teacher, dealing with the athanor will be your main task.

In recent years, it seems like that.

However, it seems that the place where the first alchemical miracle happened was in this athanor.”

Gilbert added speech balloons next to the picture of the athanor.

Inside them were the characters for ingot and gold.

“As you know, the ultimate goal of alchemists is to produce gold, the ideal metal. Well, as you know the result, producing gold hasn’t been successful at the moment. Still, alchemists continued the trial and error to make various substances in preparation to produce gold.

But at this time, an unexpected thing happened.”

Gilbert drew several circles above the alchemy furnace and extended the arrow from there to the center of the furnace.

Then he drew a long arrow extending downward from the furnace to the lightning bolt mark.

He added ‘material’ inside the upper circles and ‘magic’ in the lightning bolt mark.

“When external magical power intervened in some combinations of several materials, magic born as an accidental product.

Alchemists continued to study the miracle that happened in the furnace, leading to one big turning point.

The developed alchemy made it possible to make the same miracle even outside the furnace.

Or, although it may not be known as a smaller furnace...”

Gilbert connected the picture of the alchemy furnace and the wand of the alchemist’s figure with an arrow.

“Aah! The wand, it was originally an alchemy furnace!”

“That’s right. The appearance, the scale and how it works are very different, but the basis is the same.”

“In other words, because it was the external magical power that caused the miracle inside the alchemy furnace, perhaps it was charged into the wand?”

“Correct. It is not the internal magical power that is charged into the wands, but the external magical power.

And this external magical power has a big problem... Phew~ finally we got into the main topic.”

Gilbert put the chalk down and wiped his hands with a handkerchief that was wet with water.

He rubbed the area between his eyebrows with his clean finger and relaxed it, and sighed like an old man.

“What do you mean, Aniki?”

“Botchan, I would like to ask you something. Do you think that you need things like alchemists’ gloves when you use a wand?”

“That is a matter of course.

Without gloves, the recoil of the wand..... ah!”

Harold stared at the illustrations on the blackboard intently.

I see. Somehow I understood.

“The identity of the reaction is the external magical power, isn’t it?”

“Great answer. When using a wand, there are several holes between the person and the wand.

At that time, the external magical power contained in the wand flowed into the human body.

Although it can be dismissed if it’s just external magical power, it will have a harmful effect if it’s built as a spell.”

Gilbert flipped the blackboard and drew a picture of a wand and a hand on the opposite side where nothing was written yet.

And then, he drew a line along the shape of the hand.

“With the exception of Botchan, normal human beings are born with power to hinder external magical power.

It is the inhibition value measured by Rainbow Strap a while ago.

Inhibition values have ratings from 1 to 6, and the more the number of rainbows there is, the more difficult it is for the person to get the recoil.

Alchemists’ gloves artificially reproduce the inhibitory effect of the human body.

With this, even humans with low inhibition values can use wands relatively safely.”

“Then, I’m...”

“I don’t know if there are gloves that correspond to people with inhibition value of zero.

Because Botchan is a really rare case, it’s uncertain whether there is even a scholar who is researching about that.”

Hearing Gilbert’s words, Harold dropped his shoulders dejectedly.

It had to be pretty painful.

Since he loved to work with wands, it had to feel like a death sentence that he couldn’t use wands in his lifetime.

“Don’t be discouraged, Botchan.

Didn’t I say it? You have a miraculous constitution.

There are some areas that the lower the inhibition values, it will be all the more advantageous.”

“W-what do you mean, Aniki?”

Gilbert drew several arrows from the hand to the wand and drew a few more arrows bounced off the line representing the inhibition value.

“When constructing a spell with external magical power or charging a wand with magic, the existence of the inhibitory value is rather an enemy.

It’s an obstructive ability that supposed to protect the user’s hands, but it interferes with the creator.

The feeling when charging a wand with a spell is different for each individual, so it's difficult to put into few words, but it seems that phenomenon such as 'the convergence of the magical power was disturbed' or 'the form of the spell is distorted' will happen."

"Then, in the case of me who has zero inhibition value...?"

Gilbert grinned as he looked at Harold.

"Conversely, no matter how difficult it is, you should be able to construct and charge as you like.

If it's done by Botchan's hands, external magical power will be packed in a wand while being static and stable like a windless lake surface."

"Such power, in my hands...?"

"It's a rare talent that only seen one in a hundred of years.

Any complicated and esoteric magic can be built easily.

Magic that an ordinary alchemist takes more than an hour to build will only take you the time it takes to think.

In other words, you have miraculous hands."

Well, it depends on Botchan's efforts, Gilbert added to conclude his explanation.

For a while, Harold was staring at Gilbert with a blank face.

Suddenly turning over towards me, he gazed at his hands.

"Even if I'm told that it's a miracle, it still hasn't kicked in.

But... but, somehow I feel very happy right now."

Harold said while staring at his hands.

Somehow, it seemed that his dark green eyes were becoming teary.

"Yeah. I don't have to use a wand. Maybe it's fine like this.

Surely, it's my destiny to live as a wandmaker."

Harold expressed his determination while holding his palm over his head.

That was good. Harold would surely recover.

On the contrary, he was livelier than before the lecture started.
Gilbert shrugged his shoulders and spoke to me in a loud voice.

“Haha, he won’t be discouraged, that guy.”

“Being positive is a good thing.”

“You have waited for a long time, does Ojou-san want to try the Rainbow Strap too?”

“Yes, that’s right. Can you lend me?”

Gilbert offered me the Rainbow Strap.

I took off my gloves and received the Rainbow Strap.

“Um, was it something like this?”

By the way, I had a constitution that couldn’t make a wand, I wondered what kind of reaction would happen in this case.

I put a lot of effort into the hand that was holding the Rainbow Strap.

At that moment, colors overflowed from the crystal.

(Eehh!? W-what is this?)

It was an eruption of rainbow-colored light.

A flash of light that couldn’t be expressed was emitted by the Rainbow Strap, and I closed my eyes reflexively.

“Oi, oi, are you serious?”

“Uwah... what is this...”

I heard the murmurs of the two people.

After a while, I felt the light settled behind my eyelids and I opened my eyes nervously.

Rainbows like wide ribbons surrounded me, centering on the shining crystal.

One, two, three... I counted as many as seven.

Seven?

Just now, he said that there were only up to six.

While looking at the rainbow confusedly, the seven rainbows ribbons suddenly started moving.

Those seven rainbows stood upright and pointed upwards.

The light around the tip star crystal strengthened even further, and the internal star steel also began to shine like gold.

There was an illusion as if someone in the sky gripped the ribbon-like rainbows and was pulling them.

I felt goose bumps appearing all over my body.

Beautiful, but somewhat horrifying.

I let go the Rainbow Strap in my hand unintentionally.

At that moment, the seven rainbows disappeared and the light residing in the Rainbow Strap also became smaller little by little.

At this time, I noticed that my heart was beating fast.

“That surprised me...”

“W-what was that just now? What does it mean, Aniki?”

“Wait, wait, I’m confused too. Give me some time to settle down.

Really, what’s with today. To think there are two singularities at once...”

Gilbert gulped down the cider as he muttered.

I asked while looking at the Rainbow Strap which was rolling on the floor and Gilbert alternately.

“U-um, I wonder if I should also call you Gilbert-aniki—”

“Gofuhh!? No, no, Ojou-san, you don’t have to call me that!

As long as I know about it, I will teach you what I know, because I will have an uneasy conscience if I made you call me that.”

Then, with a light break in between, Gilbert's additional lecture began.

¹ Athanor is a furnace used to provide a uniform and constant heat for alchemical digestion. (source)

So, basically:

Hafan: external magical power -> converted into internal -> add chant and/or spell cards -> magic circle -> magic (unusual power)

Aurelia: combinations of materials -> made into wands -> charged with external magical power -> magic circle -> magic (unusual power)

Chapter 61

City of Canals (8)

“Next, it’s the explanation about humans with high inhibition value.

To tell you the truth, I don’t know much about this field.

I myself also have three rainbows, which means I’m on the low side.”

Gilbert started talking while carefully wiping the blackboard.

He occasionally stopped as he tried to write something with the chalk.

It seemed that what he wanted to talk about was not well-organized in his mind.

“The higher the inhibition value, the greater the feeling of ‘distortion’ and ‘disturbance’ when creating a wand.

Such people have to spend a considerable amount of time to create wands.

The burden of mental concentration on spell-building is also ridiculously high.”

Gilbert’s hand which was holding the chalk started to slide on the blackboard making brisk sounds.

Ooh, the lecture had resumed.

When I thought so, he started to draw a dancing two-heads-tall golem.

He didn’t know what he should write, I understood that.

“Generally speaking, suppose that there was a one-rainbow alchemist, the generally known lowest inhibition value, he could charge magic for an hour.

It depends on their training, but it goes around like this; two hours for four-rainbows, three hours for five-rainbows, so six hours is the standard for six-rainbows alchemist as the maximum value.

So, that’s right... since I have never heard of seven-rainbows, this is only a theory, but it would take 12 hours or more...”

Gilbert drew two rows on the blackboard as if he remembered something. The number of the rainbow in the upper row, and the required time in the lower row. Gilbert's hand which was writing the numbers in order stopped on the number seven. He thought for a while and put the chalk on the blank field.

Even if the seven-rainbows would be twice as much as the six-rainbows, that would be 6 to 12 times more than the required time of a general creator.

It was natural that I had never succeeded in making wands, as the necessary concentration power increased accordingly.

It was a very painful penalty as an alchemist.

"Speaking of which, even though I tried to build a spell, it quickly got distorted and broke."

"You'd better give up on building wands."

This is only a speculation, but it seems that it is the same as how the zero inhibition value cannot use a wand.

I think it's safe to assume that seven rainbows mean you cannot make a wand."

"Aah, I heard that you can't make a wand, but, no way, you won't be able to make a wand in your life time?"

That kind of thing, that's too sad..."

Harold looked at me with pitiful eyes.

Even though he should have the same extreme and rare constitution as me.

"Hmm, if you want to build a spell no matter what, it might be easier to learn mages' art."

"Eh, can I really use mages' spells?"

"Aah, let me explain a bit."

Gilbert turned towards the blackboard and drew a larger human figure.

The figure had a staff on his left hand and a wand on his right hand, then he drew a circle on both sides.

“There is a hole to convert external magical power and a hole to take external magical power as it is.

Well, rather than a hole, it is a port.”

Gilbert drew two arrows from the circles drawn in the human figure on the blackboard.

On the left, the arrow briefly went to the spiral on the stomach and ended on the staff.

On the right, the arrow smoothly curved and led to the wand directly.

“Just as a port is built at the mouth of the river of each branch, these two ports are in different places.

If you compare it to a ship, the mage’s port is the one that processes the goods temporarily in port town and carries them to inland.

The alchemist’s port goes directly from the river and carries them to inland.

If there is nothing wrong with the conversion port, there is a possibility that Hafan’s magic can be used.

Although if you start at your age, you will need a considerable effort.”

“I see, so that’s how it is.”

I looked at the illustration drawn on the blackboard.

If that was the only way to do it, I should also consider about becoming a mage.

But, I was born in the family of alchemists, so I didn’t want to give up.

“Anyway, the seven-rainbows Ojou-san should be the exception of all exceptions, it is an unthinkable constitution.

Although the zero-rainbow creators have appeared sparsely in the long history, this is the first time I see someone with seven rainbows.

How advantageous it is when using a wand, I can’t even estimate it.”

Eh, ‘advantageous’?

Perhaps similar to Harold, I had a specialized talent in using wands even if I couldn’t make wands?

“Well~, Ojou-san’s definite employment seems to have been decided.”

“What do you mean. Aniki?”

“If we trained Ojou-san properly and thrust her onto a strong ship, it will become a battleship.

It is said that the wand’s bombardment released by alchemists with five or more rainbows is a destructive force that even beat the athanor cannons.

They don’t need to reload and they are also more flexible.

If it was someone with seven rainbows, they won’t get tired no matter how much they use a wand, so wouldn’t they become the ultimate artillery battery?”

“Eh, what, that’s amazing~!! Congratulations, Erica!”

Harold shook my shoulders out of excitement.

Eh, but Gilbert-san, what did you mean encouraging little girls like me to work for the army?

“Do they even have a position like that?”

“Alchemists that are on the battleship use spells of extraordinary magic.

I don’t know exactly because it is a military secret, but it is said that if you don’t have more than five rainbows you won’t be able to serve in the military.

The famous example these days will be Duke of Aurelia, the Long-Armed Ernst.

It seems that he is a super long-range type, he would calculate the roundness of the stars and bombarding beyond the horizon.

In the naval battle against Gigantia, I heard that countless super large giants have been made into sea algae from outside the range of normal battleships.”

Certainly, Ernst-otousama’s characteristic skill was the extended range of his wands.

If such a ridiculous technique could be used, was he actually the same seven-rainbows as me?

No, Otou-sama should have been able to build and charge spells.

He should have about five or six rainbows.

“In the last war, someone named Bort of the Evil Eye seemed to have great skills.

Using a special visual magic which they monopolized the manufacturing method, they

were able to aim an outrageously wide area simultaneously.

With Magic Missile that had its power expanded, it is said that each fleet could do wholesale arrest.

It seems that they were famous for their greed, and got territories that were part of the royal territory and a part of the southwest islands as the reward.”

“Really.”

“There was also the one who was renowned as the most powerful alchemist during the era of Severe King Jean, with epithet Magic Missile, King Erik Aurelia.

With a dazzling translucent beautiful appearance, he was our cruel, arrogant, and unforgiving King.

It seems that the main offensive wands like Magic Missile were developed in his era.”

“I see.”

“Even if you can’t make yourself a wand, a cavalry alchemist will tailor lots of it for Ojou-san.

If you survive the war a couple of times, you will get some of the southwestern islands as your territory.

When you reach old age, you can manage farm in a tropical country.”

“Uwah~, how nice!”

“That’s the dream, right~. If only war happened again~.”

I didn’t understand why Harold and Gilbert were in favor of going on a battleship.

I wondered if all boys liked warships.

I apologize for having to tell you this, but I didn’t want the war to happen.

I felt like it would never be a bad thing if it didn’t happen.

Far from doing a meritorious deed, it seemed that I would die inadvertently before I became active in the military service.

“So, that’s why.

Why don’t you try special techniques like the one that cavalry alchemists use?”

“Is there a technique like that?”

“It seems to be a wand alteration.

It interferes directly with the spell at the time of the wand's execution, extending the effective range or shooting it all together.

If it is true, it's a dangerous technique similar to thrusting your hand into a furnace, but you have to force it with your high inhibitory ability.

I can only explain it roughly because I didn't know much about it, but if it is the seven-rainbows Ojou-san, you might succeed in one shot unexpectedly."

"Oh, that's great, Gilbert-aniki!"

The two of them took the initiative and were getting excited by themselves.

The two had begun to clean up the things used for the lecture such as the blackboard and others as quickly as possible.

"Even if you said that... do we really don't need to learn the theory first?"

"Nope, I don't think it will be useful to teach you more theories.

Practical learning will be easier to understand."

"Isn't it fine, Erica.

There are still many prototype wands, so go ahead and try using them."

It couldn't be helped.

I reluctantly agreed to use another wand.

Along with Gilbert, the three of us moved to the test site.

Harold engraved letters for making golems on the ground once again.

"I will help too."

"Ooh, thank you!"

Since it wasn't always possible to succeed with a single shot, there was not much to be done.

When the two of us finished writing the letters, Harold launched the golems.

More than thirty earth golems began to rise.

The over-all length was two meters approximately.

Because they would only become targets, I omitted the walking function and just made them stood at equal distance from each other.

Harold handed me a new wand.

It was the Wand of Rain of Stone that I had used in the battle against Palug, Harold-style arrangement version.

“It creates countless jade fragments and is charged with spells to downpour in a wide scope.

It seems that there is a strange peculiarity in the material I used, so the materialization time is a little short.”

I remembered Onii-sama’s Wand of Rain of Stone.

I was certain that the stones maintained their shapes for about five minutes.

“Hey, Harold. In general, how long is the materialization time?”

“If it is pure substance materialization or matter creation, not a material transformation, even for a moderately skilled creator it wouldn’t be longer than 10 minutes.

If you use precious stones like jade and materialize a large mass each time, 5 minutes would be the limit.

I should be able to make them materialize for about 4 minutes, but this wand is about 2 and half minutes.”

I see. So Eduart-oniisama could go up to the five minutes limit.

As expected, Onii-sama.

A versatile cheat alchemist who also wasn’t an ordinary wandmaker.

“Well, let’s try it first.”

I put on the gloves returned by Harold and waved the wand once.

A jade-colored magic circle formed over the aimed golems’ heads, and several pieces of sharp stone fragments that had formed were pouring down and pierced into the golems.

The time between the formation to the stone hail from Harold's Rain of Stone felt shorter than Onii-sama's.

In proportion to that, the range where it poured down was a little on the smaller side. For the time being, it seemed there was no part where my power worked.

Gilbert, who was watching the situation, opened his mouth.

"Anyway, why don't you try shooting them in one go?"

"Shooting them in one go, huh. What should I do?"

"Hmm, well, I don't know anything concrete.

So, try to somehow forcibly pull out the spells from the wand with an image?"

Gilbert somewhat roughly told me the appropriate thing.

While holding the wand, I closed my eyes while feeling anxious for some reason.

There were lots of magic packed inside the wand in a form like glass beads.

As I waved the wand, I imagined taking all of those beads in one go.

Although it might be an illusion, I felt a sense of lots of beads rolling in the wand I held.

The image solidified.

"I'll try it."

I waved the wand lightly.

"...Ah."

The magical beads in my image tumbled down all at once as soon as they stopped.

Countless magic circles shining in jade green color covered the area over the golems' heads.

It looked like roughly thirty magic circles formed all at once.

A moment of silence.

And then a roaring sound reverberated.
Soil dust blowed up and covered my vision.

After a while the roar stopped, and the dust subsided.
Every golem there was crushed and scattered about as a wreckage.
Most of the pulverized pieces turned back into lumps of soil, and there were also holes in a pattern like a honeycomb on the remaining fragments.

“Uooh~! What a destructive power! *This* is the true Rain of Stone!”
“I shot a lot all at once. Unexpectedly, all of them were shattered by one attack.”
“...Scary, what is this, too scary!

However, you truly succeeded in your first attempt, as expected from the person with the rare seven rainbows.

Amazing, Ojou-san, if those were human opponents, wouldn't they die immediately?”

That was troubling.

It was too exclusively for extermination warfare, the amount of energy consumption was too much and it couldn't be used in a friendly interpersonal match.

However, it might be an effective attack against the phantom beast.

It would be worth training.

“You are amazing. It is the most valuable guinea pig... I mean, sample.”

With sparkling eyes, Harold gripped me with both hands.

He rephrased it hurriedly, but I heard 90% of his real intention.

(T-this guy...)

He had quite a mad scientist disposition to treat a girl of the same age as a guinea pig.
I refused to become a guinea pig.

“Yes, yes, thanks for that.”

“Become my partner! No matter how you think about it, we are destined for each other!”

“Ha?”

“You cannot make a wand, but as a user Erica is unbeatable.

I cannot use a wand, but as a creator I am a genius.

These are talents that make up for each other! We are born partners!”

I certainly felt that our compatibilities seemed to be good.

But I didn’t live near Knot Reed, so I guessed it would be difficult to be a guinea pig as a pretext of a partner.

“I beg you!”

Hanging around the direction I turned away, Harold held my hand and asked.

Somehow, he looked like a healthy medium-sized fluffy dog.

What should I do.

I wanted to refuse the role of a guinea pig, but I didn’t want to hurt his feelings.

“Hey, hey, hey, Botchan. That way of saying is not good.

If you want to make advances, you have to think about the other party’s feelings, or you will be a nuisance.”

“Such a thing, Aniki...”

Gilbert hit Harold’s shoulder and shrugged.

To that helping hand, I felt relieved. I was glad that there was an adult with a good judgment.

As Harold’s hands became loose, I pulled my hand out of his grasp.

I shouldn’t tell him the truth that I wasn’t very good at closing the distance suddenly.

There was the previously mentioned fraud case, so I wanted to keep a reasonable connection, but I also had trouble getting along well with others.

After I gave a moderate advice and evaded the destruction, I would like to fade out naturally.

“I guess the price estimation is about to end.

I am waiting for my company and I’d like to return to the shop, is that fine?”

“Ah, that’s right. You are a customer.”

Harold suddenly raised his head.

Alright, it seemed that he was still in good spirits.

“Aah, Ojou-san is my old man’s customer, huh.”

“If we don’t go back, that all-black mister will be worried.”

“Well, then, Gilbert-san. Thank you for today.”

“Hahaha, if we have other opportunities for a proper lecture, I will teach you about Alteration.”

When I lowered my head, Gilbert laughed somewhat uncomfortably.

Gilbert waved his hand and went to see us off, and disappeared back to the depth of the Wunderkammer to hide from the shopkeeper.

So, the ‘materialization time’ mentioned in this chapter is about the duration the stones or any other substance that were created by magic could maintain their shapes.

Chapter 62

City of Canals (9)

Harold and I came back to the Turm Wand Store after finishing the wands' trial and lecture from Gilbert.

All the wands were arranged carefully on the table, with simple notes on each one.

The estimation seemed to have ended.

[Ooh, you have come back, huh.]

"I'm sorry. Am I late?"

[No, no, I'm also sorry, our conversation unexpectedly became lively.

This is a good time to end it anyway, given that we are taking a break right now.]

I sat beside Tirnanog,

Tirnanog stroked my hair with a big gloved hand.

"Wha~t. So we don't need to worry then."

"This, Harry. You should care a bit more about our customers."

"Oops, I have to bring another cup of tea for Erica~."

The shop owner made a complaint to Harold.

Harold retrieved the pot in panic, and returned to the back of the store.

The shop owner was all smiles as he turned to face me.

"The numerous wands must have given you a lot of trouble, right?"

"No, no, it's good for business."

[You should be relieved. There seems to be no problem in repairing and charging the wands. About the price and the time for payment...]

The price was quite high, but the completion was quicker than I thought.

If it was only charging, there were even wands that were completed on the next day. The reparation of some of the expensive wands had to be postponed, and I had to compromise for the rest of the wands.

“Then, please charge this one, this one, and this one... ah, and this one.

If possible we would like to collect some of them tomorrow, so please give priority to the offensive and visual wands.”

“Understood. Well then, in total, the deposit is—”

I confirmed the face value of the contract produced quickly by the shop owner and signed on it.

In exchange for passing the deposit money and the wands, we received a metal card engraved with the same emblem and feature as the store signboard.

It was a careful consideration worthy of a nobleman’s shop, so that an envoy could come and receive the wands.

“Huh? Are you leaving already?”

“Sorry, Harold. Because there are other places I have to visit after this.”

“Just in time. Harry, please carry the teaware to the workplace.”

Harold came back with a steamy pot.

The shop owner wrapped the wands that he had with a soft cloth one by one while giving instructions to Harold.

We said our farewells to the shop owner and Harold and left the store.

However, after we were walking for a while, a voice came from behind.

“You guys! If you don’t mind, can I guide you to where you wanted to go?”

“We’ll gladly accept it, but is it fine for you to leave the shop?”

“It’s fine, it’s fine.

It seems that there are interesting wands, and Master won’t let me help him.

Today it seems there won’t be any more customer coming~. So, it’s fine, right?”

[Isn’t it fine?... This brat, he seems to be involved in *that* matter.]

Tirnanog quietly whispered.

It was something I already knew, but he seemed to have pulled out information from his conversation with the shop owner.

He was such a competent guardian.

“So, where are you two heading right now?”

[First of all, we are searching for alchemical materials.]

“Also, a bookstore. It will be even better if it has books about things related to folklores.”

“Heeh, a bookstore and a material store, huh. If that is the case, I know a nice shop.”

We took a small boat from the ferry landing and went to the canal following Harold’s guidance.

The second purpose of today was to investigate the price of alchemical materials with star steel as the main object, and to collect local data.

Of course, both were part of the countermeasures against the phantom beast.

“If you need ores or monster materials, then you should go to <Goblin Street> and <Barker Street>.

For the bookstore, you should go to <Poisoner Street> that you can find if you get off in front of the monastery.”

We got off on an island that was about two blocks away from Crucible Street.

Then, something that looked like a yellowish green ball passed by my feet as I got off from the boat.

Tirnanog picked it up when it was about to fall off the river edge.

“What is that? An unripe orange?”

[Fumu, it doesn’t smell like oranges.]

The thing in Tirnanog’s hand was a citrus fruit.

It looked like an orange but it was a bit different.

What was it, this thing.

Looking closer, the same thing was rolling around everywhere.

As I walked and picked up three of those, I met a woman with long red braids who was picking up the fruits rolling on the road.

“Huh~!? Bell-anechan, what’s going on?”

The woman who was called ‘Bell’ by Harold looked towards our direction.

She was an earnest-looking lady in her early twenties who was wearing clean and comfortable clothes.

Looking like she found a Buddha in Hell, she turned her enthusiastic gaze towards him.

“Aah~, Harry, you come just in time. Help me~~!”

“Ah~, ah~, I understand. I will come back in a bit, Erica and mister, please wait a minute.”

Harold got involved in collecting the yellow-green fruits and putting them in Bell’s basket.

He told us to wait, but there seemed to be an enormous quantity for just the two of them.

I exchanged looks with Tirnanog and nodded.

We cooperated with them and carefully picked up the fruits that had spread around.

“After all, I am saved if there are more people. Thank you, everyone!”

This woman named Bell was a perfumer of a perfumery right there.

It seemed that the true identity of the fruit was bergamot¹ from Ignitia.

“On my way from the pier, I accidentally dropped down my basket...

Thank you very much for helping me even when you have a busy schedule.

If you have something you want, please come to Euclase Perfume Store, because I will

give you lots of service.”

“She’s just a disappointing person outside the store, but she is excellent as a perfumer. Please recommend the store to Erica’s friends too.”

Bell smiled broadly towards us.

Even when she gave her gratitude, she didn’t forget to promote her business, what a strong-willed woman.

“Aah, that’s right, I just remembered, Harry. This is from Gizella-obasan as thanks.”

Bell handed a small white packet to Harold.

She seemed to have wrapped it in a big linen handkerchief or something.

“Eh~, she doesn’t need to worry about it, though.”

“Now, now, can you please also share them with the mister and lady over there, Harry?

The contents are the usual baked snacks and some new candies. She made it with a top quality honey from the South.”

“Ooh, thank you!”

“Ufufu. Well then, everyone, I will excuse myself.”

After bowing, Bell went into the perfumery shop that had a signboard with a design of a lady on it.

I was talking about the Euclase Perfume Store. It was a big store compared to its surroundings.

Looking at it, well-dressed ladies were entering and leaving the store in turn.

It seemed like a nice store that was pretty popular.

Returning my eyes to Harold, he was unwrapping the bundle immediately while grinning.

“By the way, what is the reward for?”

“Ah no, I guess it was the day before yesterday, I just repaired her broken revolving-type whetstone.

The price of a round whetstone has risen ridiculously since a while ago.

There were a lot of things sticking out of the old one when I was using it as I repaired it.

Oh, since you have worked hard, please eat it. I will guarantee the taste.”

He also shared the new honey candies with us.

[Umu, it’s delicious.]

“True, this is delicious.”

What spread inside my mouth was a gentle sweetness that was rich but wasn’t overwhelming.

After studying, it was pleasant to eat sweets.

Tirnanog was licking and chewing intensely.

“Hehehe~, Gizella-obachan’s sweets are all delicious, right?”

Harold was pleased as if he was the one who was being praised.

Even though he was the only son of the Earl of the neighboring territory, he seemed to be very familiar with Town of All Kinds of Goods.

While following Harold who was walking forward while greeting people who was coming and going, I was thinking about such a thing.

At the base of the bridge, there was a statue of a goblin carrying a pickaxe.

It seemed to be the place which was the boundary between the Barker Street which had many magical beast materials stores, with the Goblin Street which had many mineral stores lining up.

“The recommended mineral merchant has a shooting star design. For the magical beast materials merchant, it has a kraken on it.”

“As expected, it’s detailed.”

“Yeah, well. This town is like my garden.

By the time I was five, I was already frequenting Master's store."

Why was he in the Town of All Kind of Goods since he was very young?

Since I had no choice but to stop playing the original game halfway, I became concerned about the family situation of the Nibelheim family.

"Did something happened when you were at the age of five?"

"At first I came for a medical treatment. Master is also good at curing wounds with a wand.

Well, afterwards I pushed myself forward to become his disciple."

"Wounds?"

"It was because of the wand's recoil. It's already healed, but there are still some traces of it."

Harold rolled up his sleeve.

There was a small portion of his skin that looked like a severe burn mark on his right arm.

It somehow resembled the shape of a flickering fire.

"It was such an exaggeration.

But thanks to that accident, I feel anxious if I wear short sleeves."

"It must have been a serious injury since it caused a scar like that, right?

I apologize for offering you a wand earlier."

"I said it's fine.

At the time of the accident... I got this scar from my father's self-protection wand.

If it is about Gust, it's not that serious, don't worry about it."

Harold replied with a refreshing smile.

I wanted to learn such a peculiar personality.

"Oh, it's Harry!"

As we were talking, I heard someone calling Harold.

It was a senior male with a good physique and attire that had a great smile on his face.

With his big belly bouncing, he rushed over while breathing heavily.

“Ah no, you arrived just in time. I’m saved.”

“What is it, Serge-ossan.”

“I have something I’d like you to repair. Of course I will give you pocket money.”

He was in great demand since a while ago, this guy.

I guessed everyone was depending on him because he was dexterous.

“Perhaps it’s the filter again~? Please buy a new one.”

“No, not the filter but the pump.

The pedal has begun to strain. Will you do it quickly?”

“Eeeh~~, have you become fatter?”

“How rude, even I got 50 grams thinner than last week.

I will give you an effective potion for stiff neck as a bonus. I will even give you medicine for internal disorder and for burn mark.”

“...Uu, it can’t be helped.”

Harold nodded his head helplessly.

Harold lowered his head towards me while looking sorry.

“That’s why, I guess I won’t be able to guide you until the end. Sorry, Erica.”

“No, you have helped enough, Harold.”

“Hehe, I’m glad then.”

Ah, that’s right.

I should also ask for the recommended bookstore in Poisoner Street.

“Also, do you know a shop that can provide information on historical and domestic beasts?”

“If you want those kind of books... try searching for a store that has a signboard with a monk that has an open book on it.”

“You really know everything, Harold.”

“No, no, this is an easy task. Well then, see you later!”

Harold got on a different boat and left.

Beside Harold who was waving at me, the man with a good physique that seemed to be a drug store owner was also bowing a lot.

While waving my hand in return as I saw them off, the boat went under a canal and became out of sight.

[He is a busy brat.]

“Hey, Tir. You also realized that he is the son of Earl Nibelheim, didn’t you?”

[Umu. While chatting with the shop owner, that kind of story came out.]

“If we do this well, we may be able to tell the matter of fraud via Harold.”

If we said it through Harold, Earl Nibelheim should become more cautious.

Rather than being told by someone he didn’t know well, his son’s appeal should be heard.

The problem was how to convey the information about the fraud to Harold.

Well, we made a step forward, we should put this on hold and think about it later.

We should go through our original schedule first.

I was looking forward to seeing what kind of store that had Harold’s stamp of approval who said that this town was his garden.

I should first find a mineral store that had a shooting star signboard on it.

I walked hand in hand with Tirnanog down towards Goblin Street.



We entered the store with a shooting star signboard made of high quality crystals.

In the center of the store there were large-sized crystals such as garden quarts and big

purple crystals.

Cubic pyrite which was crystallized to dig into white talc which was the host rock was also pleasing to the eyes.

There were about four staffs, but they were in the middle of negotiations.

I looked around the various minerals that were displayed in the case.

Tirnanog was looking from behind me.

“First of all, this is star steel.”

[Hou, so this is the ore of star steel. It’s quite beautiful.]

“Isn’t it?”

It was a crystal body of a unique star steel that had rainbow colors blurred into black.

It was very regrettable that this color tone would be lost when it was processed.

Incidentally, the price of star steel was equal to the same amount of silver.

It would be advantageous to have that much of a bargain.

Since it couldn’t be flexibly used unless it was the owner of abundant magical power like Tirnanog, naturally it would be cheap.

We should always buy spare steel for his armor.

I also made note of the unit price of magnetite, jade, amber, granite, fluorite, meteorite, etc. beside the star steel.

They also had pretty fine opals and jasper.

This was also a good store.

There was also moonlight mineral from Hafan lining up.

On the obsidian which was the host rock, there were about seven crystals of dark gray twisted tetradecahedron were attached.

I recalled the events at Ruins of Visitor with the siblings of Hafan Ducal.

I was indebted to Klaus and Ann, so I should give them something.

What should I give them?

Perfumes sold at Euclase Perfume Store might be nice.

While thinking about such things, I checked the minerals in line.

Next, we went out of the mineral store and headed towards the Barker Street that was lined with stores that handle magical beast materials.

There were shops dealing with living magical beasts and shops that were selling materials from magical beasts and phantom beasts.

My aim was the latter.

The signboard of the monster materials shop that Harold recommended had a design of a kraken on it.

There were five other people beside me.

There was a huge eyeball glaring among the huge glass bottles that were displayed in the store.

There was a bottle of preserved merman.

Among the amber liquid, fillets of merman that was peculiar to the South were spread out like the frills of a dress.

Perhaps they were imported items from the continent of Karkinos.

“Uuh...!?”

[Haha, what a bad taste.]

I looked inside the grotesque-like store somewhat fearfully.

Among the bones of chimera that looked like a mixture of a cat and a sheep, there were bones of a centaur.

The mummy of a manticore.

Every time I encountered human-like monsters, I felt that my heart was sunk.

After passing through the area of large materials, the display shelves of various sizes of preserved materials that were illuminated by the light were spread out.

On the shelves made of glass, beasts packed inside glass bottles showed up.

There were preserved mandragora and arachne that had an agonizing expression.

The preserved larvas of a hydra and kraken.

Tirnanog looked into those bottles of preserved specimens and he seemed to be having fun

[Can this be eaten?]

“It should not be edible.

Even if you ate it, it is probably too sweet since it is preserved in honey, right?”

He wouldn't be able to eat important materials, so I would deny it as much as possible.

[It's honey, huh. If it is the same degree as the candy we ate before, I think I will like it.]

“No, it doesn't taste the same.”

We were looking around inside the store while comparing ideas about the materials with Tirnanog.

Finally, we arrived at the horn of a unicorn and resin-coated cockatrice and I took a deep breath.

This seemed to be the limit of my tolerance.

Wyvern fossils, archeoptery fossils, and other fossils were everywhere.

(Yup, this seems like a good shop too. I got introduced to really good stores.)

While watching the price tag, I wrote the price of the necessary materials on a piece of paper.

Larger materials were more expensive than I expected.

But the ones with the size of my little finger nail had a very affordable price.

While I was making a memorandum, the clerk and the customer who looked like a maniac were talking about 'angel's bones' eagerly.

Everything seemed to be circulating on the continent of Karkinos.

Recalling the lion-shaped angel who I made friends with lately, it made me feel inexplicable things.

That reminded me, she was dying, so it wasn't surprising that there were angels that already died.

But it was somewhat sad.

After completing the general price survey, Tirnanog and I quickly headed towards the bookstore.

On the island facing across the bridge, Poisoner Street, we were looking for the monk signboard.

The shop was finally found at the back of the street.

I smelled a musty scent as we entered the store.

It seemed to be packed with many old and valuable books.

I should find the books that matched my purpose first.

I talked to an old man with a monocle that looked like the shop owner.

"Excuse me, do you have a book about phantom beasts and the history of this land?"

"In the case of history, it will be over there. If it is about phantom beasts, just go further back."

As he pointed at the two places bluntly, I asked the old man who had started to organize the inventory once more.

"I'm hoping for materials about the phantom beast who actually exists around this area, if possible, do you have such a thing?"

"...Hou, what an interesting customer.

Yeah, there are two good ones. Please wait a moment.”

The books that the shop owner found for me was a pilgrimage story related to this land and a diary of a merchant.

¹ Bergamot is a hybrid of lemon and bitter orange.

Chapter 63

City of Canals (10)

While being carried by Tirnanog, I climbed the wall behind Water Palace.

Tirnanog was walking on four legs without attracting attention.

It was a bit awkward because he was not completely in his dragon form, but the mobility couldn't compare to upright walking.

(After all, he's working too hard...)

I forgot about it since he seemed fine, but Tirnanog was in his convalescence period after his restoration.

When this matter was over, it would be nice for him to have a relaxing rest.

While thinking about such, we arrived at the veranda of my assigned room.

It seemed that Palug hadn't return yet, so we entered the room and waited for her.

After we entered the room, Tirnanog shrugged off his mantle.

The stuffed toy-sized Tirnanog jumped out from inside the crack on the back of his armor that looked like a cicada's husk.

He made one turn mid-air and landed brilliantly on the carpet.

[Good grief, finally I got my solid body back.]

"Sorry for troubling you today."

[Don't worry. It was quite fresh and fun.]

Aah, leave the armor as it is. So it will be easier tomorrow since I don't have to stretch it again when I wear it.]

After saying so, Tirnanog dragged out a large washbasin from inside one of the large luggage that was brought in and poured water in it.

It seemed that he was going to relax by bathing.

I put a sheet over the armor that was thrown away before someone else saw it.

Now then, I should look over the materials before Palug returned.

I sat on a chaise longue and spread the books I bought on the table.

First off, let's read the book I purchased.

The pilgrimage story was a book that summarized anecdotes from the surrounding area by monks.

It was a collection of stories about various folklores that the seven horse-riding pilgrims gathered to kill time.

It had many stories about monsters and phantom beasts which made it the perfect book for my purpose.

The story of the first weir and the kraken.

The tragic love story of the Silver Alchemist who married the Northern Princess.

A story of an old monk who carried out serial killings by smearing poison on banned books.

A story of a navigator that got shipwrecked in seven voyages by seven kinds of monsters.

A story of an alchemist who made the Cursed Sword of Fire and fought against the Prince of Sword.

The tragic love story of the Eastern Princess who loved the golden-haired Werewolf Prince.

The story of a goblin and the cursed silver.

Somehow this region had many materials about the magical beast Kraken.

Yeah, was this the death flag for six years in the future?

While it was worrisome, but the seven kinds of monsters, magical swords, goblins, and werewolves were also worrisome.

As I wrote a summary in a notebook with a simple illustration, Tirnanog peered into it.

[There is no problem if it's just an octopus. I will devour all of them.]

"Yeah, I will leave it to you then."

Next, I turned over the manuscript of a diary written by a merchant some hundreds years ago.

In addition to the notes about the fluctuating price of wheat and eggs, worrisome descriptions were mixed in.

For example, the poisoning incident that occurred in the monastery two hundred years ago was described as a warning against greed.

This was probably the story of the old monk who made a serial killing by poisoning the banned books in the previous pilgrimage story.

I see, I should compare these two books to know what era the folklore was based on.

While reading the book and taking notes, I heard the door opened.

From there, another me appeared while grinning broadly.

It was Palug who had finished dinner.

When I looked over my shoulder, Tirnanog was asleep as he bathed inside the washbasin.

"Welcome back, Palug."

"I'm back. Oh my, this guy, he's sleeping already?"

"It's because he had worked hard today."

"Hmm. Then it can't be helped."

When Palug returned to her former state and crept closer to Tirnang, she touched the water inside the washbasin with the tip of her nail.

After a short time, the water began to foam and steam came out of it.

[Mu!? Aah, what, it's the cat, huh.

It seems that I fell asleep.]

“Good morning. Isn’t it a good hot water?”

[Umu. I don’t really care about it.]

“If you didn’t wake up, I would have just kept it boiled as it was, you know~?”

Tirnanog stretched pleasantly inside the hot water.

Palug chuckled and sat beside me and looked into the spread materials.

“Oh my, my master is very diligent.”

“If there is something I can do during my stay, I want to do it.”

“This is also useful for me. Tonight I will go to the pilgrimage point that comes out in this book.”

Palug brought a wagon with silverware dishes.

“The two of you haven’t eaten yet, have you? Eat this properly, okay?”

That said, Palug opened the silver dish covers.

Steamed chicken, steamed cabbage with warm carrot salad, and cheese appeared from inside.

While eating, we shared information on our first day in Knot Reed.

“First, let me hear about what happened today in Water Palace, Palug.”

“After switching, I didn’t see Earl Nibelheim.

Aah, that’s right. In order to match the talk with Ernst and the others, I need to keep you updated about the launching ceremony.”

I cut a steamed chicken with a knife and fork and thrust it into Tirnanog’s mouth as I listened to Palug.

The sauce on the chicken and the warm vegetables used cheese and they were very rich in flavour and delicious.

“I see, for example?”

“As the new aircraft carries golems inside, it seems that the Golem Guild is supporting

it in general.”

The Golem Guild here was not the guild where golems gathered but the guild of golem creators.

It was a powerful group as factories used golems in many areas.

“Is there anything else?”

“As for maritime insurance bidding, it seems that there was a dispute before we arrived.

As expected, it seems that Turm decided to take over.”

As expected from the successful merchant Turm.

They were going to take over the maritime which was a big insurance essential for shipping.

“Another thing. There are rumors that the alchemist who got caught by an aristocrat from Ignitia to make white porcelain had escaped.”

“Oh, that is some progress from the rumor I heard before.

So it’s not missing but run away, huh.”

“It seems that they escaped in the middle of the incident in Island of Messenger.”

So there was such a thing happened in the shade of panic due to Auguste’s super-wide mental interference, huh.

If it was someone with the blood of the Visitor’s Clan who wasn’t easily influenced by the mental interference, that incident was probably a great opportunity.

It would be nice if they successfully ran away, that white porcelain alchemist.

“It seems that the arrival of the previous aircraft carrier of Ignitia is delayed, and it is likely to arrive around tomorrow.

If there is nothing wrong, it seems that the launching ceremony will be held on the day after tomorrow.”

“That means Auguste will also arrive on the day after tomorrow.”

When I said so, Palug smiled ambiguously.

Oh, didn't she want to meet him soon?

"Are you a little disappointed?"

"Fufu, as long as I can meet him, I don't mind even if it is a little late."

I returned the slightly off topic to the information collection result of today once again.

"Is there any rumor about the fraud?"

"Six months ago, it seems that a large-scale scam of antique art had been exposed.

Most of the scammers were caught and it seems that the punishment had also been executed."

"So there was a scam of antique art goods. But if they were caught then this may be a separate case."

"Since the main criminal of this case seems to have escaped, isn't there a possibility that he will do something similar again?"

There was also a possibility that the content and target of the fraud had changed from the original game.

Perhaps it might have been different as the result of the previous two incidents had changed.

"I tried to explore the stories related to the silver vein, but there wasn't any particular result."

"Yeah, nevertheless, we have to tell Earl Nibelheim to be cautious of fraud."

"That's true, but how do we tell Earl Nibelheim about the situation, that's the problem..."

If I got close and went to see him, I will look like the con artist."

Even if I told him with a letter, depending on the content it could be seen as a threatening sentence.

And I couldn't advise him with the appearance of Erica.

While murmuring such things, Palug had a thoughtful expression.

Certainly, an advice like *'Be careful as you are destined to be deceived'* was exactly what a con artist would likely say.

"Ah, that's right! There is a good news on that matter."

I told her about Harold Nibelheim that we encountered in the city.

At the same time, I also added stories about when we were at the back at Turm Wand Store and about the young man Gilbert.

"It would be nice to be friends with him and check the situation frequently in correspondence."

"Not bad, the situation would look somewhat suspicious but I think we can get through it somehow."

Tirnanog who almost finished eating the steamed chicken pitched in the conversation.

[When I was in the wand store, I heard something similar about the red-haired brat.]

"About my constitution and Harold's constitution, Gilbert explained it in detail for us."

I told the two of them about the matter of constitution measurement using Rainbow Strap.

About the recoil of the wands and our encounter with Gilbert.

That Harold didn't inhibit external magical power at all while I inhibit the external magical power.

[Hohou, isn't that a wonderful power?]

"Um, yeah, I don't know anything since it's a different culture, but is that advantageous?"

"I also don't really get it."

Tirnanog started to argue with sparkling eyes.

[It means that you won't die, no matter how much you drop a star. This is the power that deserves gold!]

"Eeh~~, what is that. You mean the Alchemist's Star? Uwah, isn't that too dangerous?"

[Prostrate yourself before the power of the Star of Aurelia, cat.]

“Eeeh~~~, humans are too powerful~~!!”

Although it was the cause of Tirnanog’s death, it seemed that he had a special feeling towards Alchemist’s Star.

No, maybe it was *because* it was his cause of death.

The Wand of Sailor’s Song which created a star in the sky was beyond the common sense of this world.

I didn’t think there would be that many opportunities to use such a dangerous wand in my life.

“Ah—, that’s right, is Gilbert handsome?”

Palug had changed the topic to be about the good-looking man.

It probably became troublesome to talk about the Alchemist’s Star with Tirnanog.

“He’s not a great beauty, but he feels like a good young man with a sense of freshness. He looks a bit nasty, but he is kind and seems to be good at taking care of people.”

[Is the face that important to you?]

“It’s very important, you know~. I will not hesitate to repeat this over and over again, it’s important~.”

[How vulgar...]

I started eating the warm carrot salad and cheese in the gap when the two of them quarreled as usual.

[But that young man Gilbert. I was hoping that he will go to see the shop owner, but it seems to be difficult.]

“Tir, did you talk about that with the shop owner?”

[Umu, he said that he kicked his son out because he was mad, but he couldn’t help but worry.]

“Come to think of it, Harold did say something like that.”

[Since his son also has something that he wants to make, it seems that he went out of this city to learn the technique.]

“I see...”

Well then Gilbert was lurking in that store even if he returned home.

It reminded me that he said there were special circumstances.

“But well, with this, we have finished sharing each of our information.”

[Umu.]

“So, we will take action tomorrow, but we will receive the completed wands first. With this, 70% of the wands will be available.”

“Hm, oh my. There is still 30% left?”

“There are wands that cost a little expensive.”

The price of those wands was incredible.

For example, among the wands that were used before, Urd Sight was too expensive so it was impossible.

Since he used a lot of this wand, Klaus’s debt to Onii-sama was ridiculously high.

“I think I will also make contact with Harold and Gilbert.

I also want to hear the continuation of the lecture course.”

“Humm, meanwhile I think that it is good to stay with Ernst again.”

“Yes.”

After the three of us were done planning, what remained was the nightly survey of Palug.

“Well then, now is a good time to do my own job.”

“I will leave it to you, Palug.”

Palug turned herself into the Hero with somewhat short blonde hair and white skin. This bold and charming young man was the Severe King Jean.

“It’s a bit exciting to go for a night trip. Ufufu.”

[Do not be discouraged. You don’t have enough power right now.]

“Oh my, are you worried?”

[Hmph, if you don’t get accustomed to your power quickly, our plan will be delayed!]

“Yes, yes, well, I’m going~!”

After bickering with Tirnanog, she turned around in somewhat high-spirits to survey the surrounding area.

Jumping out of the window, she flew across the canal.

After I saw her off, I finally sunk into the soft bed.

First of all, yes, apparently Zaratan (Tir) died by Alchemist’s Star, and Jaconius died by knife. I mixed it up, Japanese is really hard since sometimes they got no subject >< I have fixed the corresponding chapters.

Also, Palug’s former state mentioned here is her voluptuous beauty form.

Chapter 64

Crucible Street (1)

The morning of the second day after visiting the Trade City Knot Reed.

I woke up with the feeling of something hitting my cheek.

The true identity of the furry thing that touched me over and over even when I pushed it away was a cat's tail.

On my bedside, Palug who had come home unnoticed was sleeping with her legs spread open.

It was safe as she was in her cat form.

No, whichever form she was in, that was no good?

For the time being, I put a suitable cloth to cover her.

Although I wanted to comment about her sleeping posture, I would endure it because she had been working hard.

[Meow~... as the chief of the angels, on the annual Holy Angel's holidays... I shall demand for a dedicated handsome dancer~... mrrrow.]

"No, how is that okay?"

Oops, I made a comment without thinking.

Palug woke up while rubbing her face with her forelimb.

[Oh, morning, Erica. You're early today.]

"Good morning, Palug. I just happened to wake up early."

I purposely didn't touch on the subject of her sleep-talking or the matter about her tail, letting it go.

Revitalized, I also greeted Tirnanog who was lying on my feet.

“Good morning, is Tir also going to wake up?”

[Nn... umu, I have no problem waking up anytime.]

There seemed still time before a maid brought the breakfast here.

Let's hear about the results of last night's investigation from Palug.

“How was last night, Palug?”

I got off the canopied bed and walked to the built-in writing desk.

I opened the notebook with the summary I put together last night, and prepared a quill and ink.

[I went to the pilgrimage destinations written in the book that Erica had bought.]

[It was probably around a different branch of the Varnalis River.]

[... It was an interesting result. I went to three places last night.]

In spite of saying that it was interesting, Palug's tone of voice seemed to indicate that she didn't find it amusing at all.

I could hear a slight irritation and anger.

[There was an altar of the Holy Lord and the angel, though.

The surface part where the believers would make a pilgrimage was still beautiful.]

“Surface part?”

[The true altar to devote spiritual power as an offering is hidden in the lower part.]

“Heeh, I see.”

[The precious true altar seemed to be normal at first glance but the ritual had been corrupted and camouflaged.]

This was an unexpected information.

Originally this investigation was to check that the importance of the altar had not deteriorate and destroyed.

[The spiritual power that had been gathered was scattered in the sea.]

“Such a thing, is that okay!?”

[Well, who knows... but there are changes in marine life, especially in the magical beast species.]

Tirnanog who had been listening quietly while Palug and I talking, opened his mouth.

[Magical beast, huh. By the way I’ve heard about such a thing from the shop owner.

It seems that the damage by kraken has increased in the waters around Knot Reed for nearly three years.]

There was a premonition that I had poked a bush and found a snake.

What was this.

[Heeh~~. What an interesting story.]

Palug say so while looking like she didn’t find it interesting at all.

Well, that was natural.

For example, using a metaphor, if the protection money was not paid, it was natural to be abandoned.

[There was also a shrine of a phantom beast that was probably a substitute for the local god, but all the functions had stopped.

It seems that it was completely destroyed along with the phantom beast over hundreds of years ago.]

“That means, that place is safe for the time being.”

I opened a list of temples for pilgrims that I had listed last night.

I quickly made check boxes next to the list.

[Last night it was here.]

For each temple I made two types of check boxes, which were 'the presence or absence of a camouflage' and 'phantom beast'.

"As for the matter of camouflage, I will contact the church of Ignitia later and have them repaired."

[I will be saved if you do so.]

As we continued our discussion, I heard a knocking sound.

It seemed to be the maid who brought our breakfast.

I would repeat the schedule we had confirmed last night before we had breakfast.

When the maid went away after changing clothes, I substituted myself with Palug.



Following the same procedure as yesterday, we went out of Water Palace.

I held hands with the all-black Tirnanog and slipped into the crowd of people.

"The main purpose is to receive the wands, but I'm hoping to see Harold and Gilbert."

[Umu, that's right.]

After passing by a gorgeous horse-drawn carriage as we headed towards Town of All Kinds of Goods, we were stopped from behind.

"Oo~i! By any chance, it's Erica, right!?"

A familiar voice.

When I turned around, a boy was waving his hand from inside the carriage.

A boy with blonde hair were rushing towards our direction as he got off from the horse carriage.

The boy was wearing a crimson cloak and was accompanied by three dragons.

The colors of the three dragons were gold, white, and red respectively.

“Auguste-sama! Long time no see. Those are the children that have just hatched, right!?”

“Aah, the red one is Briar and the white one is Blumbell.”

“I’m glad they hatched, congratulations.”

Auguste smiled very happily.

I was glad that he had succeeded in hatching the dragons, it made me happy too.

The golden dragon Goldberry on Auguste’s shoulder peered into Tirnanog’s face and her expression suddenly turned bright.

Did she found out his true identity?

What should I do if Auguste noticed it.

As I thought that, Goldberry remained still on Auguste’s shoulder in a stance just before she leapt.

She seemed to be suffering while looking at mine and Tirnanog’s face alternately.

Ah, she was reading our expression and atmosphere.

Perhaps because she had become an older sister, she seemed to be smarter than when I saw her before.

Looking at the state of Goldberry, Tirnanog gently held his hand out in front of her.

When Goldberry jumped onto his arm with a joyful expression, Tirnanog placed her on top of his head.

“Kyu...”

[Fumu. It is as I heard, it seems that she likes the golems Ojou-sama made.]

Goldberry seemed to be full of tranquillity on Tirnanog’s head.

Tirnanog looked at her and murmured.

It seemed that he was going to mislead with this direction.

I nodded while making eye contact with Tirnanog.

“Is this person your escort? Heeh, is this a golem prosthesis made by Erica?”

“Yes, this is my employee.

I made some golem prosthesis for his body because of a major accident, but my guardian is strong enough.”

[Umu. I have died once, but I was helped by Erica-ojousama.

Since then, I regard the fact of being a guardian of Erica-ojousama as the reason for my existence.]

Fully human golem and homunculus were illegal.

Adding two more layers to my face’s thickness, I lied smoothly.

Tirnanog added words that were not lies, but were likely to be misunderstood.

Before I knew it, the two red and white dragons began hovering while flapping their wings in front of my eyes.

Their round and clear eyes were staring at us with curious appearances.

Both of them had jewel-like sparkling eyes, they were very beautiful.

“Nice to meet you. Please take care of me, Briar and Blumbell.”

“He~y, come and introduce yourselves, you two.”

“Kuu...”

“Kyu~! Kyu~~!”

Red Dragon Briar and White Dragon Blumbell bowed their heads to me.

I felt a subtle character difference from their cry.

The one with red scales and spessartine eyes, Briar, had a modest and quiet character.

The one with white scales and ruby-colored eyes, Blumbell, was an active and energetic child.

“Uwah, uwaaah, how cute! Your dragons are cute, Auguste-sama...!!”

“Right~?”

Unlike the refined style of the small dragon Goldberry, these two felt bulky.

The body that had the atmosphere of 'I'm getting bigger now' was very lovely.

"Nice to meet you, Briar and Blumbell."

I held my arm out to become a scaffolding for the hatchlings, and Blumbell quickly got on.

This child had a quicker movement.

"Kyu!"

"Ku~..."

Because Briar who missed it looked so sad, I put Blumbell on my head and called Briar. Then Briar jumped into my arms timidly.

Auguste who was watching the situation raised his voice in admiration.

"Heeh, you're hugging already?"

"They are good children."

While enjoying the feeling of the smooth scales of the hatchling, I asked Auguste.

"By the way, did Auguste-sama come to Knot Reed for the launching ceremony?"

"Aah, I substituted for my father. I just arrived yesterday evening."

"Yesterday? Huh, what about the other people from Ignitia?"

Incidentally, the aristocrats from Ignitia supposed to arrive today using the old aircraft carrier.

Did he arrive at Knot Reed earlier?

"Certainly, I was supposed to come using the old-style aircraft carrier this afternoon. I came through the Varnalis River after doing an examination in Lindis."

I see, so Auguste was using a different route, huh.

Since Lindis was in the upper stream of Varnalis, he only had to come down the river

from there.

“Since I have arrived in Knot Reed with great troubles, I was about to go out to buy supplies for these children.”

“And then you found me.”

“You seem to have come out to shop. Oops, don’t do that, Blumbell.”

As the naughty Blumbell began to pull my hair with her mouth, Auguste lifted her up.

“Yes, I was also trying to buy a bit of alchemy tools.”

“I see, alright, why don’t I send you to your destination with my carriage as I also have something to talk to you about?”

“Thank you very much, Auguste-sama.”

Because he had generously offered it, I got on the carriage.

It was hard to give up the boat, but since he wanted to talk then a closed space would be better.

Chapter 65

Crucible Street (2)

Tirnanog and I were invited by Auguste and boarded the gorgeous horse-drawn carriage of the royal warrant.

In addition to Auguste, there was a single guest.

No, should I say a single animal?

It was a black dragon almost as big as a human being.

Was it a new dragon for Auguste's protection, or was it someone else's dragon?

At first I thought so, but I noticed that the black dragon was reading a thick book while holding it deftly.

The black dragon raised its eyes from the book and looked at us and then Auguste in annoyance.

It had chrysoberyl-colored eyes with vertically elongated pupils that reminded me of cat's eyes.

The dragon sighed wearily, and closed the book with a somewhat human-like gesture.

"Auguste. Supervising your behaviour shouldn't be included in my work this time."

H-huh? That voice, just now, where did it come from?

I felt like I heard it from the black dragon in front of me.

Dragons of this world understand human speech but they shouldn't be able to talk in our language.

"No, no, don't get me wrong, Professor.

She is a lady with a proper background."

"It is said that unmarried royalty should not invite unmarried opposite gender into a closed room.

You are not in the age to have a suspicious affair, so I will overlook it this time, but hereafter please be more careful.

The problem is not about whether her background is proper or not.

Or did you think that I don't know about the identity of that girl?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sorry, Professor."

"I apologize for inconveniencing you with my inconsiderate behaviour."

When I apologized, the black dragon who spoke human speech looked at me coldly.

The stare was somewhat sharp.

It seemed to be subtly disgusted, it felt like that.

"Professor, she is..."

"Daughter of Ernst, the Duke of Aurelia. I know.

In any case, this girl is also going out in secret.

I think that neither introduction nor greeting is necessary if we are not here for each other."

My true identity was exposed in one shot.

There shouldn't be anything distinctive in today's clothes and belongings.

Or was there something I hadn't notice yet?

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, I am called Erica Aurelia."

Bowed and smiled softly.

The other side refused to greet, but it shouldn't be a problem if I did it.

It would be safer to respond politely even if the other party was not favourable.

However, after I said that, as if he didn't hear me, the dragon who was called 'Professor' turned away from us.

As Professor opened the book he was reading before, it seemed that he began to devote himself to the content again.

From the cover, it looked like a magic dictionary or something like that, but why would

a dragon read such a thing?

“Ah—... sorry, Erica. He is that kind of person.”

“It’s fine, I don’t mind.”

“That’s right, Erica. This is a slightly more complicated person.”

“I understand. Is he a mutant dragon who speaks human speech or an experimental body?”

Auguste said that he came here from Lindis, was it about this person?

Indeed, this certainly was interesting.

“She is a girl who is rich in delusion and whose ideas tend to leap. She closely resembles Eduart.”

“Are you acquainted with Onii-sama?”

“No, never mind. Auguste, please continue.”

This black dragon seemed to know Eduart-oniisama.

I wondered if anyone involved in Lindis Magic Academy knew him.

My older brother seemed to be conspicuous, whether it was in a good way or a bad way.

“This is my other cousin. He is a professor at Lindis.”

“Did the royal family get married with a dragon?”

I was surprised that humans and dragons would get married.

It was shocking that they would be able to mate.

Would the Federal Kingdom become a country governed by a King with a dragon’s figure someday?

“No, no, in Ignitia, someone with the talent to harmonize with the consciousness of the dragons would rarely appear.

Professor is that kind of person, well, that is, he is a special dragon-user.”

“What do you mean by ‘harmonize’...?”

“Because he completely unified his consciousness with the dragon, he can move it like his own body as you can see right now.

His body is currently in the far distance Lindis, you know?

It’s a bit extraordinary, isn’t it?”

Auguste’s ultra-wide dragon control couldn’t be done easily, but this person was also special.

If Auguste’s control was far and wide but shallow, the black dragon seemed to be narrow but deeply controlled.

“I see. The inside of this black dragon is a proper person and is currently in Lindis?”

“I don’t want to reveal my name right now, so I would like you to call me ‘Professor’ for the time being.

I will introduce myself officially when we meet in Lindis, Aurelia.”

The dragon called Professor certainly had a more human-like look than a dragon.

He was a human smelling of sorrow and pessimism.

“That’s why I’m moving by a carriage, because I stand out with Professor.”

“I see...”

Huh, then I wondered why Auguste came to Lindis.

“So, what business does Auguste-sama have in Lindis?”

“Part of it was because my eggs were hatching... the rest, I want you to keep it a secret, is that fine?”

“Yes, if I betray Auguste, you can do an equally terrible thing to me.”

“Why would I do such a thing? Anyway, it’s about the incubator to hatch eggs.”

Auguste continued speaking.

Dragon eggs managed by Ignitia royalty were to be preserved and hatched on an incubator called Chalice.

Only a royalty could enter the strictly controlled room with the Chalice in it.

Yet, he said that unexpected things had happened.

“To tell you the truth, it was said that the Chalice was tinkered with.”

“That is...”

“Magic that blocked off telepathic power was performed by means of an ancient magic. It seems to be a magic to see dreams forever.”

“That’s why the eggs won’t hatch...!”

This was certainly a valuable information that I couldn’t say to anyone.

Not only it was a blasphemous act against the dragons related to the royalty of Ignitia, but also a treason?

The traitor was supposed to be in the depths of the royal family.

“Um, is that what Louis did as well?”

Louis Ode-Ignitia.

He was the son of the Second Prince of the former King and a dragon knight who hated the Crown Prince Auguste and tried to usurp him.

“I got a high-ranking mage to screen Louis’ thoughts from the surface to the deepest part, but it seems that he couldn’t find anything.”

“How creepy. Are Briar and Blumbell that were exposed to such magic okay?”

“The dragons weren’t altered by that magic, so they are fine.”

“What a relief... truly.”

I extended my hand and stroked the two hatchlings that were lying in a heap on Tirnanog’s knees.

Soft and warm.

Someone’s malice obstructed these children from being born into this world.

I disliked such abnormal malice from the bottom of my heart.

“Officially, the eggs hatching was delayed because of my problem, but we decided to investigate strictly behind the scenes.”

“Auguste-sama’s problem... are you fine with that?”

“I’m completely fine with that.”

Auguste still laughed as cool as ever, but I couldn’t read his emotion.

He had a poker face because he lived by being exposed to the malice and enmity of many people from the very young age.

“First off, the royal family, and the aristocrats around the royal family are suspicious.

Next, since the Chalice was created together with Lindis, people related to the magic academy are also suspicious.

But, if we make a big fuss in our investigation, people might die like cutting a lizard’s tail.”

It was a scary story.

I would like to avoid poking a bush and find a dead body.

“That’s why, just like Erica’s brother’s investigation, this time Professor is planning to investigate.”

“Professor’s ability to hide himself is perfect for this investigation, huh.”

“We have to hide this from the Lindis as well~.”

“Perhaps this is also a secret from Eduart-oniisama?”

“Aah, that’s right.”

I guessed it couldn’t be helped as it was for precaution.

It would be safe to ask Professor who was a royalty and a Lindis-related official.

“Also, I was told since I was going to meet Professor anyway, I should try and train to become a Theurge.”

“Theurge?”

“It’s the person who is able to perform the secret arts of spiritual harmonization that I was talking about just now.”

“Is Auguste-sama also trying to harmonize your consciousness with Goldberry?”

“I tried to do it but it was useless. Apparently, I don’t seem to have an aptitude with

possession technique like that.”

“No, Auguste. You are jumping to a hasty conclusion.”

Professor who was looking out of the window seemingly uninterested in our conversation until just now looked back and said so slowly.

“It is because of your spiritual problem that you cannot use the full possession technique.

There’s no need for you to hold so much fear, the soul of a dragon is not so vulnerable that it can be crushed by the soul of a man.

Your ingenuity and training are more than sufficient... it is deplorable.”

“I will take it as a compliment, Professor.”

“Hm... Auguste, be aware that optimism is both good and bad.”

The black dragon shook his head in a human-like manner, and returned to his original posture once again.

Auguste looked at the state of Professor and shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, because the technique of Theurge is not just possession.

I am learning from what I can do.

If there is a chance, I’ll even demonstrate it the next time we meet.”

The carriage stopped at the timing when Auguste said that and winked.

It seemed that we had arrived at Crucible Street where the usual alchemy-related stores were lining up.

“Oops, we seem to have arrived.”

Goldberry left Tirnanog while looking unhappy.

Tirnanog looked exhausted when I glanced at him.

Meanwhile, Professor was turning pages of the book unconcerned.

“Well then, let’s meet again later, Auguste-sama.”

“When the launching ceremony is over, let’s walk the streets together this time!”

“Yes, I’m looking forward for that.”

We separated from the Ignitia party and headed for Turm Wand Store.

Auguste called the black dragon as ‘kyoujuu’ which means ‘professor’, whereas Erica called Actorius with ‘sensei’ which means ‘teacher’.

So, can you guess who the black dragon is?

Chapter 66

Crucible Street (3)

Tirnanog and I went under the sign of the tower and crescent moon and entered the Turm Wand Store.

As usual this store seemed to only have few customers.

Let alone customers, I couldn't even find the clerk.

[We have come to pick up the wands.]

When Tirnanog called out, Harold emerged from the back of the store.

Apparently, Harold was the only clerk.

"Welcome! Wait a minute, I will call Master!"

"Thank you, Harold."

Harold just got a little look and went to the back in no time.

We waited for them and sat on a chaise longue.

After a while, the shop owner was brought by Harold and appeared at the storefront.

"Well, I apologize, but can you give me an hour more?"

The shop owner made an apologetic expression.

When I heard the detailed explanation, he said that it took some time to charge the wands.

It seemed that the wands created by Onii-sama were obfuscated and difficult to analyze.

Everything included the unexpected mechanisms that couldn't be found at the estimation stage.

[Oh, there is no problem. I believe in your skills.]

“I appreciate it.”

Tirnanog nodded magnanimously and sat down on the sofa.

The shop owner ordered Harold to prepare the teaware just like yesterday and went to the storefront to lower the ‘not open for business’ sign.

Harold who came back to put the teaware on the table, whispered into my ear the moment the shop owner left.

“Do you want to go to Aniki’s place today? We can listen to his lectures, or do some more trial shoots.”

“To be honest, that’s what I intended to do.”

“Haha, say that quicker! That’s great!”

The shop owner came back when we tried to go to the back of the store.

He saw Tirnanog drinking tea by himself and looked around with a surprised appearance.

“Hey, Harry!”

“Master~! I’m going to talk about making golems with this lady, so we’re going to the back!”

“Wait a moment. Why are you suddenly talking about golems?”

“No, it’s just that this lady knows about golems in detail.”

As expected, Harold got caught by the shop owner who chased him.

Harold told such a lie while making eye contact with me.

I nodded my head in a hurry.

The shop owner seemed to have remembered something and stared at me and Tirnanog alternately.

“Haha, certainly... but, I hope he doesn’t annoy you, Ojou-san.”

“No, it’s a lot of fun.”

The shop owner released his hand from Harold reluctantly.

The shop owner went back to his workshop, after saying '*Don't trouble her too much*' to Harold.

"Well then, Tir. Please pick me up at the storeroom after you finished receiving the wands."

[Umu. You got it.]

When I waved my hand, Tirnanog raised his cup in reply.

As Harold pulled my hand, I headed to the door leading to the storeroom.



"Oya, so you have come to visit today as well, Ojou-san."

When we opened the door of the storeroom, Gilbert was there preparing something.

Canceling the compound he was working on, he hurriedly put his tools away.

Was he working?

"Do we get in the way?"

"No, no need to worry because I was just killing time."

Harold put a circular package on the desk that Gilbert had cleaned up.

It was collected earlier by Harold when we were passing through the backyard.

From the package there was a delicious smell.

"Oh? What's this? It has a nice smell."

"Hehehe, Aniki, have you had your meal?"

Tada~! Gizella-obasan gave me this candy onion tart!

Don't hesitate to eat it, go on, eat!"

When he opened the package, a big brown tart appeared.

It didn't seem like a snack, it seemed to be more of a side dish tart.

Looking at it, Gilbert looked up to Heaven exaggeratingly.

“Ku~h! Seriously, tell me quicker in the morning!

I have eaten properly at my older brother’s store!”

“Eh~, is that so? Then you don’t need this?”

“I do! When I start to feel hungry, please warm it up again.

Please just leave it be for now, Botchan.”

“Alright.”

I sat on a vacant chair and watched over their exchange.

The room was cluttered as usual, so it seemed that something would break if I moved around carelessly.

“So, what’s your business here? Do you want to see my cool face that much?”

“A-ni-ki?”

“Hey, hey, I’m just kidding. Is it the continuation of the lecture about wands? I got it ready.”

“Alright!”

“Please take care of me.”

Gilbert put the bag which was placed in the corner of the room on the desk after the tart package was removed.

He looked like he was having fun as he spread the contents of the bag.

Gilbert’s second wand course was starting.

“First of all, from the part that had become ambiguous yesterday.

We’re going to explore the Alteration of spells a bit more.”

It seemed that we wouldn’t use a blackboard for today’s lecture.

Gilbert referred to the wands arranged on the desk.

“There are certain standardized things in the spells that can be charged into a wand.

When constructing a normal spell, it is the norm to combine the least burdensome and most convenient particle size.

Well, as long as you think about the size and power.

This also determines the creation time and the complexity of the spell-building.”

Arranged on the desk, there were three Magic Missile wands.

Even though it was the same kind of wand, each wand had a different design.

“The most basic way of making this wand is this.”

He pointed to the wand with the most familiar specification among the three.

It looked like it was made of very common materials and was in accordance with the commonly known recipe.

“Now then, there are two ways of doing Alteration to the magic of a wand.”

Gilbert advanced the lecture while looking at me and Harold alternately.

When he did that, Gilbert seemed sincere.

I thought that people were missing out because of his tendency to act insolently around people he wasn’t close with.

“The first way. Altered its construction during the creation time and charge it. This one is easy to understand.

It’s a heavy burden at the time of creation, but it’s a way to make the wand easier to use.

The more spells that make up the high-order magic, the harder it is to break up the established composition.

That is why it costs time and material.

This technique is the specialty of Duke of Aurelia, the head of Visitor’s Clan.”

Gilbert pointed towards the wand with elaborate design.

It was a special wand made of materials that seemed to be much more expensive than the first one.

As I had been told, many of Otou-sama's wands were specially made.

Harold watched the luxurious wand with shining eyes.

"Making something like this, it seems very fun~~!"

"Haha, the reason why you can enjoy the burden of creating extended wands is because Botchan is special.

The remodelling of the magical structure is generally difficult and painful."

"Heeh, no way~!"

Ever since he was told that he was special, Harold seemed to have become even more involved in making wands.

It certainly would make me happy if I was told that I was suitable for doing what I liked to do.

"Then the second way. In this case, it can only be performed by performers of a certain disposition, but the creator will have it easy.

Generally speaking, you just need to stuff in large quantities of magic with standardized particle size into a wand.

This is the way to use the method you were using yesterday.

Along with the command execution of the wand, the performer places a load on the magical structure, break and distort the spell, then reconstruct and activate the desired result.

It is necessary for the performer to have a strong enough inhibition to endure the burden on the magical structure and the knowledge to reconstruct as they desired."

"...And my disposition is suitable for this?"

"That's correct, Ojou-san. By the way, here is the wand sample."

Gilbert handed the third wand to me.

H-huh? It was heavy?

The size and the materials seemed to be the same as the standard wand, but it was somewhat strange and heavy.

And the build was considerably thoughtful.

There was a fine design that wouldn't be seen if you didn't look closely that seemed to be applied on the whole wand.

"Using this method, you will need many times as much charging as usual.

Efficiency gets considerably worse because the spell is broken and distorted, and it deviates from the optimum particle size.

Even though you can put 200 or 300 charges, you could at most activate the wand two or three times.

Therefore, it is suggested to prepare a dedicated wand for that purpose."

I stared at the wand in my hand.

In short, it was a wand that was charged many times as much as a normal wand.

"Because this is a borrowed wand, I cannot let you use it...

Here, this is the wand you used yesterday.

It should be able to have 100 charges stuffed into it, but right now the amount of charge is zero."

"Eh..."

It was surprising that it would be empty.

I thought that 70 charges would remain since I used 30 for yesterday's simultaneous shooting.

"Both methods will have a recoiling reaction, that is, the magical power that flows back to the user at the time of execution is huge.

However, there is a stronger recoil when heavy wands like this were used, so there is a further burden on users."

"Ha~... if it was someone with a constitution like me, they absolutely shouldn't use it..."

Harold said while rubbing his right arm.

It was the part that was wounded by the reaction of the wand when he was young.

“But, if we’re only talking about creating wands, both methods will be easier for someone with zero inhibition value.

No matter if it was a glasswork-like wand that was stuffed with troublesome spell construction, or if it was a strong and heavy wand that can withstood mass charges.”

“Both methods seem interesting, but I still prefer the one where I have to set my hands on it during creation.”

I noticed that Gilbert had a slightly surprised look.

He cleared his throat and kept talking.

“Incidentally, it was the Nibelheim family of alchemists in the northwestern area that had developed heavy wands with a large amount of spells.

Our Turm family helped out with the mass-production.

The main user of this relatively low-cost wand is the lower level soldiers who cannot arrange for expensive wands.”

“H-heeh, the Nibelheim family, huh... this is my first time hearing that.”

“The soldiers use this wand to bash their enemies while burning their own arms due to the recoil.”

Due to the disquieting information of his parents’ home, Harold seemed somewhat nervous.

So Nibelheim’s industry was not only producing silverware, but also producing wands as weapons during the war, huh.

“So, Botchan’s ancestor profited off the war by producing thousands to ten thousands of these wands.”

Shock appeared on Harold’s face.

Gilbert grinned devilishly.

“W-why do you know that I am someone from Nibelheim family, Aniki?

Moreover, you were speaking like my family is the bad guy.”

“It’s fine, isn’t it. Since I’m also someone from Turm family, we are comrades, you know?

Regarding my knowledge of Botchan's parents' home, well, if there is something like this—"

Gilbert took out a notebook from his bag.

In that notebook was written the name 'Harold Nibelheim'.

"Aniki, is that my...?"

"Eehh!? Are you the son of Earl Nibelheim?"

I decided to be surprised exaggeratingly.

I also noticed Harold's last name, but this 'surprise' was deliberate.

I was hiding my identity as a duke's daughter right now, and this should be the natural reaction.

"Wait! Erica! Y-y-you don't have to worry about it—"

"No way... why is the son of a noble household come to a place like this.

I, I have been very rude..."

"No, no, no, you don't need to worry. Please stop the honorific, I beg you."

Harold became flustered.

Gilbert was grinning unapologetically.

I also felt like laughing but endured it.

"Well, my father also had a rank.

Although it is only a Viscount below the Earl and he has handed it over to my eldest brother."

"Aaah~~~, stop with the revelation~~~."

"Eh... then, he was the Turm's principal!?"

"Yeah, well. Since I'm the thirteenth child, I'm just an ordinary man who is not concerned with such things like the family inheritance or concession, you know?"

This was unexpected.

No way, that shop owner was the rumored wealthy merchant who bought the noble peerage, *that* Turm elder!?

I thought that he was not an ordinary person, but I didn't think that he was *the* former principal.

"Good grief, it's not unreasonable that customers will rarely come here.

The head of the Turm family is the shopkeeper, and the son of Earl Nibelheim is the clerk.

Unless you aren't affected by scary things, or very particular about wands, right?"

"So that's why there aren't that many customers."

By the way, the one who recommended the Turm Wand Store to me was the daughter of Rails family who had a personal view about wands.

I wondered if this was some kind of surprise.

If possible, I wanted more detailed information to prepare myself, Tricia-san.

"No, this store is popular among neighboring aristocrats... although only one person will come every two days."

I guessed this store was not popular, wasn't it?

I thought so, but I decided to keep my silence for now.

"It's surprising that Ojou-san will care about it.

Oops, we got derailed.

Since you now got a deeper understanding of the wands, do you want to trial shoot again?"

Gilbert had an evil-like expression while still smiling gently, as he urged us to the testing field.

Chapter 67

Crucible Street (4)

“Good grief, when I was in the academy, I should have learnt a little about wands...”

Even after arriving at the testing site, Gilbert was turning over the pages of a book that seemed to be a textbook about wands.

In the textbook, there were lots of scraps of vellum papers instead of bookmarks and memo papers, and it seemed that he did his best for this lecture.

It might be better to give him something as thanks before returning to Aurelia territory.

“Which school did Aniki go to? Was it a local alchemy school?”

“Hm–, it was Lindis.”

“What?! The magic academy city!? How nice, I also want to go there.

I wish my father would let me...”

“Aah, if you want to incorporate Hafan-derived magic into the wands in the future, that would be better.

If you go there, you can learn comprehensively including about the unusual power of other areas.”

While preparing the golems, I was listening to the conversation between the two of them.

I would be enrolling in Lindis, so I was anxious about gathering any information about it.

“I was mainly majoring in Alchemy and Magic Creation System.”

“Huh? Master permitted your admission properly. But you didn’t major in Wand?”

“I went to Lindis *after* I ran out of the house.

My old man didn’t have any say in this... I talked too much. Move your hands, Botchan.”

“Okay, okay.”

Certainly, was there something he wanted to make?

His reminiscence matched with the story Tirnanog heard from the Turm elder.

Anyway, if he didn’t enroll as a son of Viscount Turm, was he a scholarship student?

Or maybe he found some aristocrat to become his patron and entered as a scholarship student.

“Alright, it’s in this page. Yeah, after all it seems that the image is important.

First of all, try imitating from this page.”

I looked into the page Gilbert had opened.

Examples of how to recognize the magic inside the wand were posted.

A method to recognize it as an aggregate of fine sand, a method to recognize it as a paint, a method to recognize it as a metal in a crucible—

I also thought about it by myself yesterday, but looking at this, it seemed that it was fine to be more free with my ideas.

“If you find something that fits with yourself, it seems to be better to study using that method.”

“Understood.”

“Oh, but I guess there is no actual wand. Oo~i, Botchan.”

“Yes, yes. Good grief~, you work your personnel too hard~.”

After Harold finished making the golems, he brought over some wands.

How rare of Harold, these wands were very ordinary.

“If it was me, I can make wands with a more outstanding ability.”

“Since this is a user’s skill practice, why would you make her use a special wand?”

“That is, well, that’s true.”

I chose the Wand of Magic Missile from among them.

Among the offensive wands, there was an impression that this was not the go-to wand.

I tried several images with the wand in my hand.

Sand, paint, crucible, plant seed, brick, clay.

Each one had a slightly different impression.

And one of the last posted in the textbook.

Coincidentally, it matched with the method I came up with last night.

Yarn.

I came up with an image of the yarn used for knitting.

But what was posted in the textbook was about the thinner handicraft yarn.

So, I decided to go further and think of a thinner, silky yarn.

To be honest, among the things I saw yesterday, there was a nice image source.

Based on the image, I drew out the power charged inside the wand.

“Ohh...!?”

“What is this!? Erica!?”

A thin golden thread of magical power surrounded the wand I had in hand.

I tried to imagine the thread of light which the Rainbow Strap gave out when Harold used it.

“No way, we can see the image of Ojou-san withdrawing power from the wand?”

“...Rather than that, she really seems to be pulling out the magical power.”

I unravelled the thread of magical power that was pulled out and weaved it again in the desired shape.

When I made some knots and stitches, suddenly I felt like the wand hated it, there was an illusion as if it struggled in my hand.

I guessed this was the limit.

I put the magical thread inside the wand once again and aimed the wand towards the golems.

Now then, the first shot.

Three layers of magic circle expanded from the tip of the wand.

The magic circles fused while twisting and turning, and it became one distorted magic circle.

When I waved the wand, the magic circle promptly formed one magic bullet.

I heard a small sound from afar.

One sandbag stuck on the other side of the wall was pierced, and smooth sand were spilling out.

When I looked closely at the golem in front of the sandbag, there was a small hole in the part corresponding to the heart.

“What an amazing penetrating power... this, is this truly Magic Missile?”

“Huh? That sandbag, doesn’t it have increased durability by means of special processing?”

I actually aimed for the *emet* characters.

It seemed that I got slightly misaligned when I saw a place that didn’t collapse.

As expected, I should practice the accuracy of my aim.

Second shot. Or rather, the last shot.

I waved the wand towards the ceiling.

One gigantic golden magic circle deployed overhead.

“Geh!? Wait, wait!”

“What is this, uwah!?”

Harold and Gilbert retreated back to the entrance instinctively, looking at the magic circle that expanded on the ceiling.

Ah, I should have explained first that it was aimed properly towards the golems.

Oh well.

I released all the magical power inside the wand and activated the Magic Missile with range extension.

Flashes of light were pouring down.

The pierced golems were crumbling.

Dense cloud of dust was rising.

When the field of view was cleared, all five golems that became targets were destroyed and returned into a mountain of soil.

I nodded after seeing the chest part of all five golems were pierced.

“Even if it got extended extensively, it seems that the element that aimed at the sighted part of the original Magic Missile remained properly.”

“Wait... I feel like you just said something amazing!”

The two people who were evacuating came over to marvel at the destroyed golems.

“How amazing. I cannot do something like this without leaving any trace. If I do this during the creation time, the wand will be broken.”

“To think that you will get the hang of it in just one day. What an amazing talent.”

It was a storm of high praise.

It was both scary and convenient that I could do anything with it depending on the image.

I felt some resistance of the wand when using it, so that had to be the load.

Even if it went well, I thought over it as something to reflect upon.

When I returned, it seemed better to summarize it in a notebook.

After finishing the evaluation meeting inside my brain, I decided to ask Gilbert what I was interested in since a while ago.

“Gilbert-san, is Alteration can only be applied for offensive wands?”

“No, it can be applied for various things. I think it is effective whether you tinkered with the vision, space, or location information.”

“What about past vision or future vision?”

“Well, if you tinker with time and space, as expected the load will also be high.

Before that, it costs huge amounts of money only for one use of past vision or future vision, so we cannot try it at a moment’s notice.”

“I see... so that’s how it is.”

How regretful.

I thought it would be useful if I could look to the past a year ago or if I could see six years in the future.

But, even if I deducted those, this Alteration might be quite a useful technique.

For me who had a high possibility of meeting or visiting a phantom beast from now on, it would be better to increase my attack power as much as possible.

“But, well, how enviable that you don’t have to worry about injuries even if you use an extended-range wand~.”

“Yes, if it’s only this much, it seems to be within my scope.”

“The one I recommended to Ojou-san is the type of wands that can be charged with spells in large quantities.

It’s versatile and relatively inexpensive.

Oh, that’s right.”

Gilbert pounded his hand and drew our attention.

“How about improving Botchan’s wands while having Ojou-san try out the limits of the wand Alteration?

Botchan’s hobby is profitable, surely your research about special wands will give rise to large amount of money.

You can make more variety of wands with that money, and Ojou-san can also use a lot more wands.”

I see.

If Harold could make prototype wands, my storage of weapons will also be easier to get.

If the compensation was not monetary but a report to Harold instead, then that would be even more great.

“That is an attractive proposal.”

I stared at Harold and nodded.

“Ahaha, I did it, Botchan. A wonderful collaborator has been made.”

“Aniki...!”

“See, when you made a proposal, you must appeal not only to yourself but also to your opponent.”

Harold turned red and pushed away Gilbert who was slinging an arm around him.

Well, there were differences between adults and children, so I didn’t think they would need to be shy.

I wondered if I could extend the bargaining power now.

“Isn’t that great, let’s get along well.”

“Yes, please take care of me.”

Harold grasped my hand with both hands as he smiled and said so.

“Alright, with this you have become my partner!”

“Yes...”

‘Partner’ was somewhat an exaggeration and kind of embarrassing though, but oh well.

With this we had become coincident partners of interest.

“Good, good.

If that is the case, Earl Nibelheim will be pleased as well, right, Botchan?”

Harold responded to the words of Gilbert who was looking at our exchange with a smile.

I felt that Harold’s expression was somewhat cloudy.

“No, about my father. He doesn’t want me to use a wand or create it.”

“Eeh~, why is that. Why is the Nibelheim family like that?”

“My father doesn’t like wands very much.”

Speaking of which, Harold seemed to have said similar things before.

Gilbert said to Harold with a knowing look.

“Haha, since the previous Earl Nibelheim made a profit with the munitions, did he and the current Earl not get along well?”

“My father and grandfather were very close.”

“Eh~, I thought they would have a troubling parent-child relationship.”

“Rather, in my house, my relationship with that person is pretty strained.”

Harold closed his eyes while sighing as if in resignation.

“But, well, I’m pretty sure that was my fault.”

Then, Harold began to talk bit by bit about the accident that occurred to himself.

Harold, who was a 3-years-old, was a curious child.

It seemed that he loved to secretly sneak into his father’s Wunderkammer at that time.

It was a mountain of treasure for a small child.

Lots of alchemy materials, used compact athanor, brand new beakers and test tubes for compounding, lead solidified by casting, and shavings of brass.

Harold said he could spend hours just watching the storehouse.

The day when that accident occurred.

A special wand that happened to be familiar to the Nibelheim family was rolling on the floor.

Earl Nibelheim was always carrying it around for self-defense.

Perhaps since he wasn't using it, he planned to charge it at that time, and maybe that was the only salvation.

A curious three years old child loved his cool father's wand.

If you saw your favorite adult's treasure falling on the floor, everyone would surely do the same thing.

Harold's father, who was surprised by the loud sound, came running only to see the ruined room and the figure of his son who fell down limply.

His right hand was burned red, and it seemed that the magical power was still smoldering like a flame on his skin.

Harold's father hurriedly brought him to a doctor's house for first aid.

The doctor who finished the treatment told Harold's father to give up on his complete recovery.

Although the superficial injuries would heal, it was difficult to pull out the extraneous magical power that stuck in his body.

Therefore, this child's right hand will remain limp for a while, he said.

Harold's right hand couldn't move a twitch for about two years.

After that, he earnestly requested Turm Elder, who had started his retirement, to perform medical treatment for one year.

Finally, when he was about six years old, his right arm could move like ordinary people.

"Since then, that person ceased creating wands that he was doing as a hobby, and even stopped carrying a wand for self-defense."

"That's... that's a heart-breaking story."

The topic that was brought up casually was unexpectedly heavy.

Gilbert scratched his head but didn't look sorry.

"However, while I was at my Master's store, I became completely addicted to creating wands.

After that, that person and I kept passing each other.

I admire him and I love him, but...

For that person, I seem to be a difficult child."

Harold rubbed his right hand with his left hand.

Perhaps there was still an after-effect, or maybe that was a habit when he was feeling uneasy.

"Well, he is busy at work, so I haven't got a chance to speak properly with him.

Now there's hardly any reason to talk.

He has been struggling for the mining rights of the new silver vein for the past year."

"Mining rights...?"

"Aah, the silver vein in the Nibelheim territory seems to end up withered and in low quality.

If we cannot gather any ore at all, there's no point in developing a new refining method, right?"

A warning bell was ringing in my head at the words 'mining rights of the silver vein'.

Although the collapse of the County of Nibelheim was involving silver vein fraud, I wondered if it was fine.

"But the mining rights of the silver vein... there's going to be a big money fluctuation."

"We have only bought the mining rights of the high-quality silver vein recently at last. We borrowed money with the territory as a collateral."

"Hmm, high-quality, huh. Where is the silver vein located?"

"At the County of Argene. There seems to be an unspoiled high-quality silver vein that was originally part of the royal territory."

County of Argene.

Those were words I had heard before.

And if that was certain, then Earl Nibelheim had already been scammed.

Well, since I was already chasing after the scammer, the topic had never been brought up.

“No, the rights to dig up the silver vein of Argene is never going to be sold.”

“What?”

“Hmm, what do you mean, Ojou-san?”

Harold and Gilbert stared at me with a surprised expression.

I knew that the mining rights of that silver vein was never put out for sale.

That was because I planned to inherit it from my deceased mother.

“The heiress that’s going to inherit that territory and the peerage hasn’t reach ten years old yet, so she shouldn’t be able to exercise her rights.”

All of a sudden, I felt as if the temperature had dropped a few degrees.

I could see blood drained from Harold’s face.

Have you noticed? Aurelia -> Aurum which means gold, and Argene -> Argentum which means silver.

Chapter 68

Crucible Street (5)

“Why do you know about that, Erica...!”

Harold finally squeezed out his voice.

His facial expression and voice both had a slight anger.

That would also be my natural reaction if I heard from an outsider, ‘*Your parents are scammed.*’

Now then, what should I do.

I would never hide the fact that I was the daughter of Duke of Aurelia.

That was because it would make it difficult for them to trust me if I deceive them with a poor lie.

The question was, how to explain it so that they believe me.

“If I say that I am Erica, the daughter of Duke Aurelia and that my deceased mother was Countess Argene, will you believe me?

“Ha, haaah!? No, it *is* true that the daughter of Duke of Aurelia is eight or so years old, but...”

“Wait, Botchan. Stay calm.

Ojou-san, even if you say such a thing suddenly, we cannot judge whether we can really believe you or not.

Can you prove it somehow?”

Harold, who couldn’t regain his mind in his confusion, was covered by Gilbert who was somewhat calm.

Well, of course it would come to this.

I pulled out a pendant from my neck and showed them the seal that was carved on the tip.

“Is this fine?”

The golden pendant head had been decorated.

It was a substitute for a seal used when closing the sealing wax.

A design similar to the crest of Duke of Aurelia and a design of the star.

However, it showed that the star had become a falling star to incorporate the emblem of my maternal family.

It was a coat of arms to prove myself.

“The design of the sea and the star, huh.”

“Indeed, this is the coat of arms that is only permitted by Duke of Aurelia, Aniki.”

This coat of arms was not something to wear as a joke.

Although penalties were not clearly stated, there was little to be gained by making others believe you wanted to pick a fight with an opponent that holds such authority.

They seemed to have believed me in some way.

There were other means if they didn't believe me even after I showed them this.

“I have known that you are a daughter of a noble house, but this, another amazing truth has come out...”

“Well, it's like the people that have been coming to our store.

I was wondering if you were some lady from a noble family that were traveling incognito, but the duke's daughter herself~~!?”

“It's Aurelia too. If the society is the world, then for us she is like a princess, Botchan.”

“P-princess... Ohime-sama!?”

“That's right, Ohime-sama!”

Huh, why did it come to this?

They were starting to get excited about something strange.

It had been several hundred years since King Aurelia became the minister of King Ignitia, so they didn't have to react like that.

Didn't we have something to seriously worry about?

The fraud, you know, the fraud!

"The important thing right now is to find out whether the mining rights is genuine or not, and to find out the partner who earned money from Earl Nibelheim, right!?"

As I said that, they seemed to have regained their senses as a result.

Harold replied that it would be difficult.

"We borrowed money from a northern aristocrat."

"That is seriously bad. The guys from Lucanrant have no mercy."

"The money should be returned in two to ten years."

"This fraud's timing is bad.

Now, unless you get the mining rights, the silverware industry wouldn't be able to keep going, right?

Because it seems that those guys will want you to return their money back starting tomorrow."

Gilbert looked bitter.

Lucanrant had many aristocrats that remained barbaric.

Depending on the partner, even if he said that he was caught in a fraud and would like to have time extension, there were northern aristocrats who wouldn't let him off.

This was a tough situation.

"Um, if you believe my words, I'd like Harold to tell your father."

Harold made a thoughtful expression and nodded to my words.

"I believe in you. If we are scammed, we must do something before my family gets destroyed!"

"Thank you, Harold."

"I'm the one who is thankful."

The line between me and Harold was now connected.

The thing that would cause me to die in the original game was that Harold's house was destroyed by 'the fraud of my territory'.

It wasn't me who deceived his family directly, but it couldn't be helped even if he misunderstood and blamed me.

Because no matter what the reason was, his father who got caught up in this fraud would die.

"Well then, I'm going to change my clothes since it will be bad if I go with this appearance."

Harold went towards the back of the store while running fast.

"Then, during that time I will go to the Notary Guild."

Gilbert who remained offered so while picking up his cloak from nearby.

He seemed to move for Harold's sake.

"I will leave it to you, Gilbert-san."

Notaries were essential occupations for contracts in which a large amount of money was involved.

They wrote down, managed, and certified 'what kind of people who underwent commercial transactions, and what kind of conditions they undertook commercial transactions'.

In this large trade city, it was said that a notary who was approved by King Ignitia made a guild.

The power they could exercise was also great, and at the time of non-compliance, the penalties were given under their authority.

The Notary Guild should have been in the guild hall.

As expected, the confirmation with the guild would be difficult for children like me.

It was good that Gilbert had stayed in this place.

“If it’s over there, there should be documents about the recent business transactions. First of all, it’s not worth considering that they wouldn’t suppress the detailed contents of the mining rights trading.

Especially, the one who contracted with Earl Nibelheim, I wonder who it is.”

When we worked out the details, Harold returned.

He was dressed in a dark green fine cloak and looked like a son of a noble house.

We told Harold that Gilbert would go to the Notary Guild.

“Aniki...!”

“You should depend on me at time like this, Botchan.

Since I am the youngest child, sometimes I want to be depended on as someone else’s older brother.”

Gilbert raised his thumb while winking.

“Then, I will leave the matter about the Notary Guild to Aniki, I will go to my father!”

“Does Harold know where Earl Nibelheim is today?”

“Perhaps, he’s in Water Palace. Because there should have been business dealings.”

Harold sighed deeply.

There were deep wrinkles between his eyebrows.

“The problem is whether he will hear my story properly or not.”

“If I go with you, I think it will be fine.

After all, if the heiress herself said that the inheritance is not for sale, I think that he will believe it.”

“Is that fine? It will cause you trouble...”

“Because it’s not totally unrelated with me, you know?”

Because the fraud was done using the name of my property.”

“That’s right, because we cannot afford to buy the mining rights that the legitimate owner herself doesn’t sell.”

Gilbert crossed his arms and nodded in agreement.

“Uh, by the way... if I leave it like this, will it only going to leave debt in my house?”

“If we can catch the con artist, wouldn’t it be fine?”

“No, even if we caught them, if they don’t have the money on them, it’s over.

Even if you want to contract with a new different mine, you won’t be able to borrow money.

Earl Nibelheim won’t only be deprived of money, but also his reputation, which is the most important thing in business.”

As Gilbert pointed it out, Harold’s complexion steadily became paler.

I felt sorry when I looked at him.

“Then, I will go to the Notary Guild before lunch time and I will ask about the contract. Since my seventh big brother is there, the conversation should be fast.”

Gilbert quickly wore his cloak and pulled out his bag.

He opened a door different from what we have been using and went out of the Wunderkammer.

“Now then, us too... ah, if we leave in this way, won’t your companion search for you?”

“I will write a note on the blackboard here. He will certainly notice it.”

I left a message to Tirnanog on the blackboard we used for the lecture yesterday.

It was information about the matter of fraud and where we would be going.

If I was late, I instructed him to meet me in my room in Water Palace.

“Today my father is supposed to be in Water Palace.”

“Then, let’s take a boat there quickly.”

After that, Harold and I went out to the city from the back door of the store and went through a dark-colored canal using a boat.

“But I wonder if we can quickly find Earl Nibelheim in that huge palace.”

Certainly, Water Palace should have lots of rooms indeed.

“It’s fine. Because Knot Reed including that palace is my garden.”

Harold said so while staring at the white palace across the canal.

Chapter 69

Crucible Street (6)

It was around noon when we reached the small square in front of Water Palace.

Harold and I went through the gate of the palace from the front.

Inside the palace, there was a tense atmosphere in preparation for the arrival of the Ignitia party tomorrow.

Led by Harold, we went through the corridors where the guest rooms were lining up.

It was a place I saw for the first time, because it was in the opposite direction from the room I was staying in.

Water Palace owned by Turm family was a huge building with 500 rooms.

Instead of staying at a neighboring nobleman's cottage, they always had a room prepared for him to stay during events and business negotiations.

Harold explained so.

I gradually became uncertain about where I was going.

At that time, Harold finally stopped in front of a white door.

"Is it here?"

"Aah, this is the room they lend to my father.

If he doesn't stay here, well, I will go and visit the rooms of his business partners one by one."

Harold knocked on the door quickly, opened the heavy door and immediately entered the room.

"Tou-san, are you here? There's something I want to talk to you about!"

Earl Nibelheim had a surprised expression on the sudden appearance of his son.

It seemed that he was about to go somewhere.

He was wearing impeccable aristocratic clothes, and had a coat and a document bag in his hands.

“I’m sorry, Harry. I’m busy right now. I wonder if it’s fine to talk about that matter later.”

“It’s absolutely not fine. It’s a big problem for the Nibelheim family!”

“Ah, I know. It is a big problem.”

“Eh!?”

Earl Nibelheim and Harold were staring at each other.

Unlike yesterday when he was extremely excited and happy, right now he felt withdrawn as he turned quiet and inconspicuous.

I wondered if that happy personality was some kind of acting to throw people off guard, or if it was only something alchemy-related that could make him switched into that direction.

Earl Nibelheim turned his gaze towards me and nodded while smiling to conceal his internal distress.

Somehow, I could sense deep fatigue from his complexion.

“Thank you for this, Erica-sama. It seems that you are friendly with my son, I am honored.

...I see, Harry also noticed this issue thanks to you.”

“Then, Tou-san noticed it too?”

“Aah, I was talking to the Duke of Aurelia about the mines of Argene territory, but there was something strange.”

I see, so the name of Argene territory came out during the business networking.

I became concerned about how it was communicated to my father.

“T-then this conversation will be quick. We need to find the fraudster right away—”

“The fraudster, huh... that’s right, of course, we will check it.

But, there are other issues that have to be prioritized. I have important business negotiations.”

“If you wait for too long, the fraudster will escape!”

“Harry, my business was helped by various people.

I can’t be gone from my seat at a moment’s notice, there are meetings with some people that cannot be postponed.”

Earl Nibelheim’s reasoning also made sense.

If the related party to the incident was upset and neglected the deal, his reputation would be ruined.

If his unrest was seen to the surface, his surroundings would see that he was someone who couldn’t deal with crisis and took advantage of his weakness.

He needed to look as if business was as usual.

Even after surviving this incident, if he wanted to continue the commercial transaction with Knot Reed, he needed to maintain his reputation.

But, Harold had his own logical reason.

It was the polar opposite to Earl Nibelheim’s reasoning.

Before my eyes, Harold had an expression that I didn’t know whether he was sad or irritated.

“So you still have the time to talk to the creditors of each territory, while the fraudster hasn’t been caught!”

“It’s fine, only Duke Aurelia and I know about this incident.

I have been keeping a long relationship with all of the investors in this case.

First of all, I have to speak with some of them, or I cannot advance forward.”

“Aah! Jeez! Fine, you obstinate person!!”

Harold shouted loudly and stopped talking with his father.

He slammed the door open in his irritation and left the room.

I hesitated about what to do.

I had to pursue Harold, but—

“Erica-sama, I apologize this time for causing you trouble.

But, whatever the outcome of this matter is, I will not hurt your honor.”

“Earl...”

“Regarding the matter of fraud, I have already arranged my steward to start investigating.

Please also tell my son that.”

“Yes.”

“Thank you very much, Erica-sama.”

Earl Nibelheim gently lowered his head.

He might be a person who was easily misunderstood by his appearance or words.

But, surely he was a fundamentally sincere person who wouldn't depart from his own principle.

Aah, but, this was the source of the trouble from the previous problem.

With this, it was painful for me not to say that *‘your death flag will rise’*.

I wouldn't feel comfortable living now.

I also lowered my head and followed Harold.

First of all, I had to solve his misunderstanding and told him that Earl Nibelheim was also investigating the fraud.

I arrived at the exit while becoming dazzled by the white and gold decorations that were scattered in the palace.

At the corner of the square, I found Harold standing upright.

Harold looked at my face and made an apologetic expression.

“Have you been waiting?”

“Sorry... I forgot about you and cast you aside.”

“No, it's fine.”

“I, far from convincing my father, I lost my own temper.”

“It cannot be helped. Let's go back to the store first.”

Anyway, we had to meet up with Gilbert.

I hoped there was a result that would turn this situation around.

Both of us got into a ferryboat and returned to Crucible Street.

On the boat, I told Harold that Earl Nibelheim was investigating the fraud.

Hearing that, Harold seemed to regain his calm.



We sneaked into the Wunderkammer of Turm Wand Store from the back door.

Inside the room, Gilbert was talking with Tirnanog.

When we came back, they noticed us and turned toward us.

“Welcome back. Ojou-san, Botchan.”

[I’m surprised, that was quick.]

“Sorry, Tir. I suddenly changed the schedule.”

[No, I have heard the circumstances from this guy. Something seems to have changed suddenly.]

First of all, the four of us surrounded the table and we reported the situation in Water Palace briefly.

Harold finished talking and asked Gilbert with anxious expression.

“How was it in Aniki’s side?”

“Ah no, about that. I was talking about it to this mister too...”

“It seems that something very bad happened in your side.”

Gilbert nodded with a glum expression.

Sighing, he conveyed the story he had heard in the Notary Guild.

“It seems that the merchant who should have sold the mining rights to Earl Nibelheim is no longer here.

It was only three days ago.

Every family member and servant of the merchant seems to disappear overnight.

They seemed to be in such a hurry, they left in the middle of making soup.

They had set up a store in this town for more than a decade, their assets and credits were also stable.”

It was as though they were abducted by fairies.

I felt something really ominous somehow.

No matter how I thought about it, that merchant was...

“The detailed circumstances of this story had yet to spread, but it’s just a matter of time before the story of the fraud will leak out.”

“No way...”

“However, they have no reason to do this fraud.

There is no way a business partner of 10 years will do such a thing.”

Did Earl Nibelheim get betrayed by a trusted business partner?

Moreover, perhaps even if we tried to find those people, we wouldn’t be able to find them anymore.

And, as three days had passed, it would be difficult to pinpoint the real culprit.

With this, he wouldn’t be able to recover his funds.

This situation already seemed to be heading to a rather bad direction.

“It seems that the mining rights document of the Argene territory used for the contract was cleverly counterfeited.

Perhaps, a high-skilled mage was involved.”

[So, is Hafan involved behind the scenes?]

“I wonder. If it’s only magic, people of other lands can also learn how to use it.”

[So that can’t be used as a clue, huh...]

“Oops, I have learned of the person Earl Nibelheim borrowed money from.

It was none other than Harlan Lucanrant from Margrave of Urs.”

If we called him according to the northern patronymic customs, it was Harlan Slayson. Officially, he was a man called Harlan Lucanrant, Margrave of Urs.

When he heard that name, Harold's face was drained of blood even more.

So, in Lucanrant they follow patronymic customs to name themselves, rather than a last name. Just like in Iceland, which is patronymic, Harlan Slayson means he is Harlan, the son of Slay. And if my guess is right and Lucanrant is this world's Iceland, then for the daughters, there will be 'dottir' in their name.

Although in this story, since they don't have a last name, they adopted their country's name as their official last name, which is Lucanrant. That's why, even if they seem to have the same last name 'Lucanrant', Harlan and Chloe (the game's heroine) may not actually be one family. About Claude (the last capture target)... , well, who knows? XD

Btw, this guy had been mentioned before by Ann in ch 18.

Chapter 70

Crucible Street (7)

Harlan Slayson.

The lord of Margraviate of Urs which was located at the western boundary of the Lucanrant region.

A big man that looked like a wolf.

It was said that he was a merciless and ferocious man who seemed to match his outer appearance.

It was said that he kidnapped the population of his fief without regards to gender and age, and killed them mercilessly.

It was said that many young children, who lost their parents due to the Devil Hunting that was carried out in the fief, were taken into captivity and taught them the arts of murder.

It was said that a maid who appeared in the mansion of Margrave of Urs' subordinate, was tortured for a long time under suspicion of demonic possession, and her body was thrown into the sea.

A man who constantly had such bloody rumors around him, that was Harlan.

"All the advance payments paid by Earl Nibelheim have been stolen.

He planned to pay back his debts by using the silverware industry, but as long as he doesn't have the mining rights, even that is doubtful.

If Harlan knows the status quo, I don't know what he would do."

"N-no way..."

Harold was at a loss after hearing Gilbert's report.

It was understandable.

Harold probably knew the danger of the person called Harlan better than I did.

“Did Earl Nibelheim only borrowed money from Harlan?”

“No, he also borrowed money from some of Knot Reed merchants.

It wasn't as much as the amount he borrowed from Harlan, but it was quite a reasonable amount.

They may give him some more time, but what will happen if Harlan moves too?”

Then, the partner who Earl Nibelheim said would meet earlier was probably a neighboring merchant.

While looking at us alternately, Gilbert told us the good news at last.

“There is only one good news.

Earl of Nibelheim insured his silver vein with Turm's insurance company.

If we can show a prove about this fraud crime, the insurance will be issued.

My older brother is working as a higher-up in the insurance company, so if it goes well then we may be able to skip some procedures.

It might even cover the amount of money needed to contract new mining veins, Botchan.”

“Insurance!”

Finally, colors returned to Harold's cheeks.

By the way, Knot Reed was a city full of insurance companies for merchants and nobility, including maritime insurance.

As expected from Trade City Knot Reed.

“Okay, let's go to the site if you decide so.

If this is a big deal, the Sorcery Tag should remain in the mine.

If we look at it, won't it become a clue for something?”

Sorcery Tag was a type of magic used in contracts such as commercial transactions.

It did not give a magical enforcement to the contractor, as you might imagine from the name, but it would record contract information in the goods and places.

Basically, Sorcery Tag wasn't used alone, it was used in conjunction with the corresponding document.

If it was a big contract like mining rights of a mine, it was certainly possible that they used Sorcery Tag.

[Do you know the location of the mine?]

“Uh... that is, because I was preoccupied with my father... damn it, I should have realized it sooner...”

“Wait, wait, maybe there is something like that here.”

Gilbert took out several papers from his bag.

The documents spread out on the desk looked like the actual documents used by Earl Nibelheim for this contract.

Huh? Was this an information leakage then?

“Gilbert-san, why are these important documents here?”

“There is my seventh brother in the Notary Guild... well, that happened. Please keep it a secret?”

How about easily leaking information because you are a relative, I swallowed the words I wanted to say.

Now was the time of emergency, so I couldn't say such a thing.

“The location information is here. Argene territory's... that's pretty far, Aniki.”

“No, according to this document, there is a transition magic circle that can take us directly from Argene territory to the silver vein.

It seems that the Sorcery Tag is installed in two places, inside the transition magic circle and inside the silver vein.”

“Well then, the destination is those two places.”

“Aah, but it seems a bit strange for an outsider like us to enter the silver vein... ah, no, there is Ojou-san.”

I nodded.

Since I was the heiress, it would not be an illegal invasion.

I wouldn't hold back my cooperation after coming this far.

“Is the distance to the transition magic circle far?”

“No, because it’s just outside Argene territory... if we use a boat or a horse-drawn carriage, it’s about one or two hours each trip.”

“Alright! Let’s go and check it out!”

Harold stood up quickly from his chair.

Gilbert shook his head quietly.

“Wait, even if we go right now, it’s evening. The sun will set while we check it out.

The place is a dangerous place, it’s risky to head out right now.”

“Then, tomorrow?”

“There will be the launching ceremony tomorrow. Anyway, Botchan, Ojou-san came to Knot Reed for that reason.”

Then, the day after tomorrow.

As they quarrel for a moment, I felt sorry that I would hold them back at this time.

When I thought so, Tirnanog cut into their conversation.

[No, it is possible in the early morning of tomorrow.]

“Eh, is that alright with you?”

[From my conversation with the shop owner some time ago, he said that the launching ceremony will be held at noon.

A group of Ignitia has arrived, but they said they would like the dragons to rest before the ceremony.

If we go there at sunrise, won’t we be able to return at noon even if it takes time to investigate?]

“Yes, that’s right. Then I will be able to come with you.”

“Alright, it’s decided. If we can return by noon, the Notary Guild will also be able to move at the same day.

Let’s present the evidence gathered while sending Ojou-san there.”

Gilbert stood up while putting the documents into his bag.

We would leave early in the morning tomorrow and return by noon.

We would barely be in time for the launching ceremony.

In worst case, even if we were a little late, there was Palug that could substitute for me.

“Then, I will arrange our means of transport with my older brother’s connections.”

“I will also ask my father casually about the matter of Argene territory, Harold.”

“Duke Aurelia, huh... it is also because of the compassion of Erica’s father that the matter of the fraud has not widespread yet.

Could it be that he noticed what was wrong from speaking with my father?”

“I think that my father cannot move carelessly until the circumstances are clear.”

“Aah, but thanks to that, Harlan hasn’t entered the fray yet.

It seems that Earl Nibelheim is getting a great deal of time extension by himself.”

This fraud was serious because of Harlan’s involvement.

Every time his name came out, everyone felt unnatural fear.

“Then, tomorrow’s early morning, shall we meet in front of the pickaxe and goblin bridge of Goblin Street?”

“Thank you very much, Aniki...!”

“Hey, hey, calm down, Botchan. Let’s do our best while there is a way to solve this.”

Gilbert beat Harold’s back and went out of the storehouse.

He worked fast, what a reliable person.

“Fuh...”

I sighed along with a blue-faced Harold.

I wondered if my complexion was also not very good.

While giving a sidelong glance towards my face, Harold opened his dry lips.

“I’m sorry I bothered you. Because my father... no, it’s not just my father, but my

house's fault..."

"Even if one doesn't make mistakes, terrible things like this do happen. The partner of this contract is simply malicious."

People who got caught in a fraud would blame themselves.

But the bad one was the criminal who did the fraud, not the victims.

As I said that, Harold had a face that looked like he was about to cry.

"T-thanks."

"It's fine, don't worry about it. If there is something I can do, I will cooperate as much as possible, so please tell me anything."

"Yeah... but, why would you do so much for me?"

"That's..."

I could have told him a suitable lie, but I didn't want to do that right now.

It was because I felt somehow awkward lying to Harold who was in such a state.

I wanted to be trusted by him.

"If I speak honestly, it will be a very long story. So, I'll talk after this incident has been settled."

As expected, I couldn't tell him about my previous life nor about the otome game.

But I would tell him about the future that might happen.

And then, if I was treated as a crazy person and exhausted his amiability, then that was that.

"What's with that... you're a pretty strange person. Well, that's fine though."

"Besides, we're partners, aren't we? If you are in trouble, I have to help you."

"Hahaha, that's true... haha..."

When I said that, Harold smiled.

A tear dropped down from his eye.

Harold gently wiped it with his sleeve.

However, the tears wouldn't stop and were dripping down his cheeks.

He wiped them once again. And again.

Before I knew it, Harold distorted his face and began to cry while restraining his voice.

Surely, he had been thinking that it was difficult and scary all this time.

Now, his tension thread had snapped.

I rubbed Harold's back.

From sobbing, he turned into crying loudly.

Tirnanog and I listened quietly to his cries for a while.

After crying for a while, Harold regained his calm.

"I, even if there is a painful thing, the tears have run out.

It's pathetic. I, I am a man.

But, I decide I will only cry this once.

I have decided my resolution. To be able to endure even the most difficult fate."

After wiping his face with his arm, Harold faced me directly.

I couldn't see any timidity from his expression.

"Me too... I will do what I can. That's why, Erica, see you tomorrow."

"Yes, Harold. See you tomorrow. Let's settle everything tomorrow."

Encouraging each other briefly, we left the wand store.

The City of Canals was painted with orange colors of the setting sun.

On top of the water surface that was shining golden, a small boat was moving as if gliding.

As the town was wrapped in dusk soon, Tirnanog and I returned to Water Palace.

Chapter 71

Crucible Street (8)

When we reached the window of my room, Palug who had turned into me came home. Just then, a servant was bringing in the dinner into the room, so to avoid being spotted we waited for a while.

“Sorry to keep both of you waiting. It’s okay now.”

Entering the room from the window that Palug had opened for us, I undressed my town girl-style disguise.

Not long after that, my stomach rumbled.

While eating, I would share about today’s events and tomorrow’s schedule.

There were dishes for dinner on the table.

Palug had returned to her cat form, and Tirnanog was also taking off his armor and relaxing.

I also sat down on the chair.

I squeezed a cold meat and cheese into sliced rye bread and turned it into an instant sandwich.

Cut it in half and gave one to Tirnanog.

“Because of various things, I’m going to change our schedule for tomorrow.”

[Oh my, did any problem arise?]

“In the case of Harold, some problems occurred.

The fraud has already been committed. Earl Nibelheim is not fine at all.”

[Umu, the situation is pretty bad. Everybody seems to be manipulated by someone.]

I gave tea to Tirnanog who was immersed in his sandwich.

Palug seemed to be thinking back upon today's events while poking a piece of meat.

[Speaking of which, when Ernst and Earl Nibelheim were talking, their complexions suddenly changed.]

I was in a place a little far away from them at that time, so I didn't know what they were specifically talking about.]

"What did Otou-sama do after that?"

[Ernst exchanged two or three words with Earl Nibelheim in low voices, and then he suddenly suspended their meeting.]

He told me to go back to the room, and then he called out the stewards of the property management.]

"And then?"

[Since it would be troubling if the room was completely empty, I made a stuffing in the bed, put on a disguise and watched over the situation.]

He seemed to order the stewards to do some secret investigations.

After that, wearing the same attire, he pretended to be relaxing in the hall.]

"Relaxing?"

[His facial expression was as usual, but he was feeling very nervous and he seemed to be listening to other people's conversation.]

He was spoken to by some people, but they were just talking unrelated things and they seemed to have passed his test.]

As expected, Otou-sama seemed to be keeping secret about the matter of the fraud in consideration of Earl Nibelheim.

It was likely that he was confirming how the current Argene territory was managed by making use of the stewards.

Even while acting like usual so that he wouldn't be suspected, he was trying to gather information on his own.

I told Palug the detailed information on fraud which I had found out today.

[Oh no, it's a much bigger fraud than I thought!]

Then it's not only the collapse of one noble house, but it also seems to have a big impact on the merchants who are rooted in this city, right?]

“Speaking of impact, some days ago, the merchants on the side that had sold the mining rights seem to have disappeared suddenly along with his family and employees.”

[That merchant’s family, they are not alive anymore, are they?]

Tirnanog added a conjecture that I couldn’t say even if I wanted to say it.

Palug also narrowed her eyes and nodded.

[I agree with the snake.

There is no reason increasing the risk of finding trouble by escaping with the servants.]

[Perhaps the real culprit who set up the fraud cut down that merchant and his family. Just like cutting a lizard’s tail.]

“...Yup.”

When I listened to the story for the first time, I also slightly felt it was like that.

They were not escaping, it was highly likely that they were murdered.

This case had a much more dangerous smell than just a fraud.

[Erica, compared to the oracle of ruin, how is the current state?]

“Perhaps, this fraud case will be the impetus for Harold to bear a grudge against me.”

Since I didn’t know the spoiler of the original game third scenario, I had no choice but to guess.

However, as long as this situation proceed, the cause was almost definite.

Harold was under impression that I was the one who triggered the destruction of his family.

He resented me enough that he felt I should die.

[With the current course of events, the present Harold will be a comrade of Erica.

I wonder if we can we assume that the fate of the oracle could be avoided?]

[In any case, Erica. Is this not the time to quit?

If you are involved any further than this, you could get caught in extra danger.]

“Yes, that’s true, but...”

What the two of them had pointed out was right.

There was a feeling that it would be a mistake if I got involved in this.

But, I wanted to help Harold if possible.

No matter how many times I shook it off, Harold’s crying face always came to my mind.

I gazed at Tirnanog and Palug alternately.

“Please. After all it is worrisome.”

The phantom beasts glanced at each other.

Their serious-looking faces broke in a blink of an eye.

[Kukuku, it can’t be helped since you have said that much.

Whatever Erica chooses, I will try to fulfil my role as your guardian.]

[Fufufu, I was just teasing you.

I have taken your good-naturedness into consideration.]

They both laughed while looking at me.

“What, both of you are mean people!”

[Hahahaha, what are you saying, my friend. We are not people, remember? Right, cat.]

[Ufufufu, only at times like this I feel like we are of the same mind!]

A somewhat prideful poor response had been made.

I filled my mouth with the sandwich that I hadn’t been able to eat with all the talking just now.

Delicious.

By the way, my head was full of fraud and I skipped lunch.

The saying ‘hunger is the best seasoning’ was true.

While chewing the food, the two beasts carried on with their conversation.

[Because of that, tomorrow we will have a very tight schedule.

From early in the morning we will head to the mine, investigate it and we will be back here by noon.

Then Erica will change place with you and participate in the launching ceremony... that's the situation.]

[My, my... the schedule is very tight, huh.]

It might be better to think about a contingency plan in case we weren't in time for the launching ceremony.

Because Tirnanog would be there, I thought that it would be all right as long as a Palug-class equivalent phantom beast didn't come out.

"If it seems that we will return late, Palug should just depart for the launching ceremony.

You can see Auguste from a good seat."

[You will be able to meet the person you wanted to see, but do not leave your seat.

Because that golden dragon has a good intuition.]

[Yes, yes, I'll do it perfectly. Yesterday and today, I did it perfectly, didn't I?]

Palug's mimicry was high-level, in fact, Otou-sama didn't even notice it.

While it was a good thing, for some reason I felt remorse that I did something bad to Otou-sama.

"Aah, that's right, I remember Auguste's story.

There was some good news for Palug."

I told her that I met Auguste and Professor in the city.

When she heard that the two dragons, Briar and Blumbell, had hatched from their eggs, Palug became tearful.

[So... so that's how it is. I'm glad, Auguste...]

She never shed a tear for herself, but when it came to Auguste, she cried easily.

When the story shifted to the dubious magic that was put on the Chalice, her expression changed completely, and her anger was revealed.

[No way... of all things, such magic was put on the Chalice...?]

“It seems that a dream magic which blocked telepathy was applied.”

[As long as it was in a place I could invade, I would have torn off such dirty magic.]

[It seems that they aimed for a place where your protection is thin.]

When Tirnanog pointed it out, Palug bit her lips bitterly.

It was said that the room where the Chalice was placed was beyond the door which never opens except for the royal family.

She was an angel that faithfully abided by the rules of humans.

In other words, it was the only room in Island of Messenger that couldn't be reached by Palug.

[Just, who did it? To be able to hide from my eyes.]

“There seems to be a possibility that the people of Lindis were involved in this case.

In this case, it should have been tinkered with before the Chalice was brought in.”

[Lindis... that old school, huh.

I am worried, but I cannot step into that building.]

“I'm sorry.”

[It's fine, this life-and-death situation is more imminent.

But, either way... I will definitely catch the tail of the criminal!]

Palug bristled, abruptly she glared at the direction of the window.

But, that direction was the south.

Lindis should be about southeast from here.

When I finished eating, drowsiness hit me.

They looked at me and urged me to take a rest again.

After I finished brushing my teeth with toothpaste, caring for my skin, and others, Palug also finished mimicking the appearance of Severe King Jean.

“I’m going to work overnight~.”

“Palug, don’t work too hard, okay?”

“I know. We have many things to do tomorrow, so I will do it in moderation and return home.”

[Even if you make a mistake and return home late, do not fall asleep while you are in Erica’s form.]

“The snake over there, how about I make you sleep forever?”

After quarrelling with Tirnanog as usual, Palug turned towards the other side of the window.

After sending off the shadow with the fluttering cloak who vanished into the night streets, I went to sleep.

Chapter 72

A False Silver Vein (1)

Early morning on the third day in Trade City Knot Reed.

I came home early and substituted with Palug, who had been taking a nap, and left for the city with Tirnanog.

From the people of the city where the morning mist was drifting, I heard a relaxing song.

It was the night watch singing the Dawn Song.

Shadows of men in black uniform were seen here and there as they were managing the fire of the street lamps.

The shadows were not just of the night watch.

Early morning Town of All Kinds of Goods was much more crowded than I expected and there were even open stores.

“I wonder what to do. Do you think we have time to make a side trip?”

[What are you going to do?]

“It’s necessary to prepare for if we were trapped in a pit or transited to an unexpected place.”

[Fumu, I think that’s just a needless worry... but since it’s you we’re talking about, I cannot say that for sure.]

“That’s right.”

So, I decided to buy a few items.

Some magic tools and groceries.

I carried a lot of wands as usual, so I was going to fill in parts that couldn’t be covered with a wand.

While walking by a ship without getting on it, I searched for the grocery store and the

general store.

Biscuits with mineral water, compass, and things like that.

When I tried to enter a magic tool store, I passed by a young man who was exiting the store in a hurry.

(Hmm...?)

Somehow, it looked like a familiar face.

Although he looked very plain and ordinary, there was an exquisite sense of incongruity.

Yeah, somehow, for example, were the glasses crooked?

I turned around and looked for the figure of that person.

[What's wrong, Erica.]

"I feel like there was Actorius-sensei just now."

[Hou, that gray mage?]

Elric Actorius.

He was a student of Lindis, a clumsy, glasses-wearing man.

He was one of the capture targets of the game [Liber Monstrorum] and a friend of my older brother Eduart.

But, unless he had some important business here, he was basically a person who was supposed to be in Lindis.

Why was he in a place like this?

"Elric Actorius-sensei!"

I called out his name toward the flow of people who were coming and going.

On the other side of the road, someone with gray hair stopped perfectly.

Ah, there he was.

It seemed that he actually was Actorius-sensei.

Actorius-sensei looked around the area restlessly.

His line of sight passed through the place where I was several times, but he finally noticed me.

A cheerful smile appeared on his face, he waved his hand as he approached me.

At the moment he tried to cross the path for a carriage in a small jog, his leg tripped over his own staff.

“Erica-sama, whoaaa~~~~~!?”

“Be carefu-..... aah——!?”

Actorius-sensei fell and his bag that was thrown opened mid-air.

The contents of the bag were flying out as if they had their own will.

Multi-colored potion bottles, numerous scrolls, and various magical tools.

A package that probably contained valuable items rolled through the road as well.

And then, to top it all, a wagon carrying fresh fruits rolled over it.

What was left behind was the wreckage of the destroyed magic tools and a teary-eyed mage who was reaching his hand out for the remains.

What a disaster, what a misfortune.

I severely regretted inadvertently stopping Actorius-sensei.

Truly sorry.

However, even if I had a previous knowledge about the disaster, it was impossible to avoid the clumsy flag.

I regained my senses and immediately ran toward the worn-out Actorius-sensei.

He raised himself up and picked up his glasses which were dirty with mud.

It seemed miraculous that only his glasses were safe.

He put on the dirty glasses and smiled heartily despite such disaster.

And as expected, his glasses were slightly misaligned.

“Ahaha... long time no see, Erica-sama.

Wow~, I showed you something unsightly, it’s embarrassing.”

“Are you okay? Are you injured?”

“I’m fine~, even if I look like this, my body is quite tough.”

“I apologize, because I called you out suddenly, something like this happened.”

“No, no, it’s me who was careless.”

Actorius-sensei gathered the damaged tools and thrust them into his bag casually.

Scrolls with horses’ footprints, broken potion bottles filled with contents, and other magical tools that had been made into junks.

Tirnanog and I also helped collecting the scattered goods as much as possible.

“Ah, this key... it’s damaged... I’m in trouble...”

I raised my face to the voice of Actorius-sensei, who seemed to be troubled.

A small silver piece of metal covered with mud was on top of his hand.

Although it was mercilessly bent like a screw, it seemed that it was previously in the form of a key.

It might be some sort of magic tool as it had Hafan magic characters carved on the handle.

“Perhaps, is it expensive?”

“Ah, no, no, it’s not that. We can make it from inexpensive materials.”

Actorius-sensei stopped me who was trying to take out my wallet.

As it seemed that he became more troubled when I tried to worry about it, I decided to withdraw.

“What is this key? If it is urgent, I will ask an acquaintance to introduce you to a locksmith.”

“No, that’s not it.

This key is a branch authentication key of the transition magic circle established by the investigation team of Lindis.

With my materials, I can easily make it.”

“That’s good.”

“Also, I cannot leave it to the general locksmith due to confidentiality.”

Transition magic circles were variously privileged and confidential, so the management was strict.

Tirnanog who gathered the scrolls that had rolled far also came back and joined the conversation.

[You have the spare materials, huh. You are pretty thorough.]

“Yes, that is, of course... ah, oh no. I should have prepared them on my desk.

I have to procure them from somewhere else now.

This is troubling... I wonder if the store dealing with that sort of thing has opened at this time...”

When Tirnanog pointed it out, Actorius-sensei turned pale and held his head.

As usual he was a careless and unreliable person.

“I know someone who is familiar with this area, do you want me to introduce him to you?

He might know the convenient material store that has opened even this early in the morning.”

[Umu. If it is that redheaded brat, he will have some connections and is knowledgeable.]

“Ahhh~~, I’m saved, Erica-sama. Please introduce me to him by all means.”

To my proposal, Actorius-sensei bowed his head repeatedly to me like he had found a Buddha in Hell.

Together with our new traveling companion, we continued moving toward the meeting place.

By the way, Actorius-sensei seemed to be curious about Tirnanog.

It seemed that he finally noticed the strange appearance of my companion.

“Who is that?”

“He is my servant. Because it’s dangerous for me to be walking around the town alone.”

Increase the thickness of the skin of my face by 40% and evaded the question with a smile.

Recently, I felt like I could tell a lie with a composed expression.

Actorius-sensei nodded with a look as if he was convinced.

“He looks very strong.”

“Yes, he is a very reliable servant.”

“So that’s how it is~.”

With only this explanation, Actorius-sensei had a look that didn’t have a shred of doubt.

That spared me some trouble, but I became worried about him.

“Ah, by the way, why is Erica-sama here in Knot Reed?”

“I am here with my father for the launching ceremony of the new aircraft carrier.

Since I got a little free time this morning, I’m walking down the street for a society tour.

Why did Actorius-sensei come here to Knot Reed?”

Towards my question Actorius-sensei’s expression became a little clouded.

“There was some urgent business.

The trader who was doing construction near Knot Reed found something that seems to be an archaeological site.

Since there was a strong magic reaction in that ruins, the investigation team was sent from Lindis in a hurry...”

“Is there any problem with the investigation team?”

“The document I happened to have been inspecting contained important statements about the ruins.

I hurried here in haste to warn them that there is a possibility that an unexpected

accident may occur at this rate.

It is faster to do the required paperwork by adding one person rather than forming an additional investigation team after all."

This!

Finally, some information about a suspicious ruin emerged.

There should be a monstro in that ruin that would kill me in six years.

"Is it a ruin where a dangerous phantom beast being sealed?"

"No, no, it's rather a ruin of magical equipment for military use."

"For military...?"

Oops, was it not like what I thought?

However, this was my first time hearing that there was a military ruin in this city.

"According to the literature, there seems to be a possibility that there are large-scale destructive weapons from about six hundred years ago.

It's very dangerous since that was before each country's Law of War was enacted."

<Law of War> was the law that was stipulated in the Federal Kingdom that all organizations should obey even in extreme conditions such as war.

Large-scale environmental destruction, genocide, assassination, brainwashing, torture, etc. were the main prohibitions.

"So you came to tell the investigation team that."

"Yes, if I don't convey this to the people of the investigation team, bad things can happen.

The starting investigators are mainly composed of alchemists.

If the description of the literature is correct, the power of a mage should also be needed."

Actorius-sensei fixed his misaligned glasses by himself and gazed towards the mountain area.

Ooh, when he looked like this, he was quite a dignified person.

“Especially because at the launching ceremony important people from the neighboring areas will gather.”

“Oh, that’s certainly dangerous.”

Indeed, the timing was bad now.

In the launching ceremony, not only influential people from the neighboring areas, but also nobility and royalty from Ignitia would gather.

What kind of catastrophe would happen if a large-scale destruction magic started up in this place?

Cold chill ran through my spine.

“That’s why I need the key to enter that ruins.”

“Is this the key to the transition magic circle?”

“Yes, the ruins are severely blocked so that non-investigators cannot enter.

The transition magic circle to the ruins also needs to be unlocked with keys that incorporate authentication spells.

If you don’t follow the regular procedure, there will be a mechanism to transit you to another safe place.”

That was an interesting technology.

The mechanism of branching metastasis was something that I would like to learn.

I felt that the application seemed to be useful for searching a labyrinth and storage department creation.

While we were talking about that, we reached Goblin Street.

In front of the bridge of goblin and the pickaxe, a redheaded boy with the feeling of readiness was waiting.

Chapter 73

A False Silver Vein (2)

“Good morning, Harold. Have I kept you waiting?”

“No, I also just got here.”

“Gilbert-san hasn’t arrived yet?”

“Well, he should be arriving any minute now... but, is that person also your escort?”

Harold noticed Actorius-sensei and asked.

Actorius-sensei responded with a gentle smile.

“No, he is a friend of my older brother, not my escort. I met him by chance.”

“Nice to meet you, my name is Elric Actorius.

I belong to Lindis as a King’s Scholar.”

“Oh~~, Magic Academy City Lindis! King’s Scholar!

Amazing! That means you are a scholarship student!

I am called Harold, nice to meet you!”

Harold offered his hand to shake, and Actorius-sensei responded in a very friendly way.

“Due to some circumstances, I’d like to borrow Harold’s wisdom, is it okay?

I would like you to tell Actorius-sensei about the material store that is open at this time.

I have damaged an important magical key that he uses at work so he must repair it as soon as possible.”

“Magical key, huh... that, unless you were a high-ranking mage you cannot make it, right?

To be able to repair that kind of thing by yourself... awesome!”

Receiving Harold's full of reverence gaze, Actorius-sensei smiled shyly.

Harold opened his mouth after thinking about it for a while.

"Well, instead of going to an ordinary material store, you should go to Turm Magic Store in Crescent Moon Street.

Since it's a store with many connections in Hafan, they have most rare materials.

They should be still in preparations, but if you say that you are introduced by Harry from the Wand Store, they should let you in."

"Ooh, it seems like a nice store. Thank you very much!"

I felt that Harold clearly recommended affiliated stores.

But if it was a mage with a connection to Turm, it should be a store where trust could be placed.

"First off, please cross the canal from this Goblin Street and go out to Crucible Street.

After that, head towards east and cross over about three bridges, and you will arrive at <Crescent Moon Street>, Student-san."

"Cross the canal and three bridges in the east, right."

"Right! And then, a signboard with a scroll on a tower is the landmark."

"I see, I see, so it's a scroll on a tower."

Towards Harold's explanation and hand gestures, Actorius-sensei was nodding while smiling nicely.

"Thank you very much! Erica-san, Harold-kun!"

On the boat to cross over to the other side, Actorius-sensei was waving his hand.

We watched nervously in case he fell into the river.

Tirnanog who was observing Actorius-sensei's situation just now muttered.

[He is a busy man...]

"Yeah... even though he seems to be of good birth and upbringing, he seems to have a

good head on his shoulder.”

“Harold’s perspective can also see such things?”

“Ah, the color of his skin and hair is similar to the exiled nobility from Gigantia that I have seen before.”

I was surprised that Harold’s observation was on point.

Although it was a knowledge from the original game, Actorius-sensei *was* of noble birth.

If he was an exiled noble, it was a reasonable deduction.

However, to be exiled from the enemy country Gigantia, Actorius-sensei also had a difficult circumstance, huh.

“I see... you know a lot.”

“Hehehe, this is nothing.”

[Hm, he seems to have arrived. Isn’t it that carriage?]

I turned my sight toward the direction pointed by Tirnanog.

A carriage drawn by two horses approached our location from the direction of Barker Street.

If I looked closely, the horses’ legs were fitted with golem prostheses.

When the carriage stopped in front of us, Gilbert came down from the passenger seat.

“Alright, it seems that everyone is here. Everyone please get on.”

“Uwaah. A golem-type horse-drawn carriage, it’s a splurge, Aniki.”

[Gilbert. Can we trust that coachman?]

“Aah, he is a person who is favoured by Turm family.

At the very least, he won’t be tattling to my old man if something happens, he is tight-lipped.”

When Gilbert said so, the elderly coachman made a frivolous talk.

“In exchange, this is the last time, Young Master Gilbert.”

“Hahaha, sorry.”

When the atmosphere became more relaxed, we got on the carriage.
Along with the horses’ neighs, the horse-drawn carriage began to run.

Then we proceeded toward the transition magic circle outside County of Argene where the evidence of the Sorcery Tag remained.



“Ah!”

At that time, I was watching the beautiful nature of the northwest part while being shaken by the horse carriage.
Harold, who was sitting across me, suddenly made a loud voice.

“What’s wrong, Harold?”

“Okay. I think I might have understood.”

[What do you say you understood?]

“It’s about wands. I have been thinking about the mass-filling wands that Aniki told me.”

Apparently, all this time Harold seemed to be thinking about wands.
Was this better than being uselessly negative?
On the contrary, it was admirable that he was being positive.

Gilbert, who was sitting next to Harold, had an exasperated expression and placed the biscuit that was on the way to his mouth back to the handkerchief spread out on his lap.

“Botchan, are you still half asleep?

There’s still time until we reach our destination, so you better sleep now.”

“No, no, my consciousness is clear.

I was sleepy until a while ago, but my drowsiness has been blown away at once.”

While saying that, Harold looked at our faces.

Somehow his dark green eyes were shining brilliantly.

“Last night I was bored since I have finished my preparations, so I was closely observing the mass-filling wands that Master had.

No matter how much I looked at them, I have no idea what kind of structure they have. But, just now, the answer came to me as if a fog cleared up at once.”

Harold explained that the answer was grabbed by him with a gesture as if turning a potter’s wheel.

“It’s not the time for this, but can I try it before I forget it, everyone?”

[Umu, that’s fine.]

“Yes, I also want to see it.”

“Botchan, don’t push yourself, okay?”

After getting our permission, Harold suddenly dragged out a small leather bag from his feet and opened it.

It was an ultra-compact and lightweight mobile storage.

The amount of expansion seemed to be small, but it was made to have a good maneuverability.

It was a memento from two generations ago, he said and withdrew a wand from there. When the spell building and charging were done, a magic circle was expanded and shone.

From the spell that was turned out, it was the magic of Gust.

“Yosh... this seems to be possible.”

Harold had never dropped parts nor failed to build the spell inside the shaking carriage.

With deft hands like a magician, he created a wand.

The spell building would accelerate with each turn, and the delicate magic would be finished in astonishing speed.

As Harold began to concentrate on the creation of wand, Gilbert and Tirnanog began to talk about another story quietly.

The topic I heard when I eavesdropped them seemed to be the story of Gilbert's father, the store owner of the Turm Wand Store.

[It seems that he missed you very much, he feels regretful. Come back home.]

"Haha, that self-assured old man is... I don't believe it..."

[You should return home while you have a place to return. You will not always have a place to return forever.]

"I know that, mister."

Gilbert was rubbing around his eyes with a lot of effort.

Was he glossing over the fact that he was moved to tears, or were his eyes simply tired? Unlike children, adults couldn't cry that easily.

"We almost reached the County of Argene."

I heard the voice of the elderly coachman.

Glancing around, the scenery had completely changed while we had been observing the wand's spell construction.

Harold had also finished with his wand.

Gilbert and Tirnanog also stopped talking about the story and was looking at the situation seriously.

"This is... the last one."

Harold exhaled a sigh and finished charging the wand.

"Good work, Botchan. No way, you succeeded it in one shot the next day after hearing

about it.”

[Each one was finished in terribly short time, this might be my first time seeing an alchemist like you.]

“Hehehe, that’s just how it is.”

Harold seemed to be very embarrassed, seemed like he wasn’t accustomed to being praised.

Avoiding everyone’s line of sights, he started to put away his tools in haste.

“Oops, we seem to have arrived. Everyone, are you ready?”

Gilbert looked outside the window and said so.

Almost at the same time, the horse-drawn carriage stopped with the horses’ fierce neighs.

I checked the time.

It was an hour and a half since we left Goblin Street.

Since we arrived without spending too much time in transit, I could say that using the golem-type horse-drawn carriage had been the correct decision.

We thanked the coachman and got off the carriage.

Foot of the mine of the County of Argene.

From here on, it was a race against time.

Chapter 74

A False Silver Vein (3)

A single road cut through the forest of coniferous trees, traversing it horizontally.

A part of the mountain slope located at the end of this road had been shaved off, creating a vertical stone face into which a magic device had been embedded.

Into the surface of the stone sprawling out beneath our feet, magic characters and patterns were physically engraved, forming a transition magic circle.

A brass plate about the size of a door was stuck on the wall directly with magical power without using screws and nails.

On the surface of the brass plate, the same texts as the contract documents that Gilbert borrowed were inscribed.

This seemed to be the Sorcery Tag's inscription.

"Yeah. There seems to be no mistake here."

Harold nodded, confirming the content of the brass plate.

When they stepped above the transition magic circle, the magic circle was activated by weak magical powers emitted by the living body.

The characters on the brass plate started to shine dimly and formed a small magic line that reached only the height of our eyes.

Harold picked out a single magic key and held it in front of the small magic circle.

According to the document, this transition magic circle should be able to activate with the joint Skeleton Key of Nibelheim family.

"Well then, everyone, shall we go?"

We silently nodded.

When Harold turned the key, the field of vision seemed to become warped as if to match his movement.

However, the effect was instantaneous, and everything was painted white with the intense light coming out from our feet.

There was a sensation as if my brain and stomach were shuffled, like riding a free falling thrill ride plus the coffee cup.

When the discomfort suddenly disappeared, I felt like staggering.

The surroundings were pitch black.

Was the transition successful?

“Uheeh... this is why I don’t like a hurried transition magic circle...

Is everyone here? No way, I’m not here alone, am I?”

That was Gilbert’s voice.

Considering the direction and distance of his voice, his standing position seemed to coincide with that before the transition.

“Wait, Aniki, I will turn on the light!”

Harold’s voice came and the orange light was immediately turned on.

With the light of the lantern that he had in hand, the appearance of everyone appeared in the darkness.

Apparently, it seemed that this place was the mine tunnel.

It was the same as the entrance to the mine at the foot of the mountain, and there was a carved stone of the transition magic circle.

Then, was there a brass plate with the Sorcery Tag here somewhere?

At least, there was no such thing within the reach of my line of sight.

[Hm? This is...

Oops, there is not enough light.

Erica, use this. Gilbert, you too.]

Tirnanog saw the other side of the darkness and seemed to notice something.

He turned to me and took out the star crystal lamps and handed it to me and Gilbert.

“Thank you, Tir.”

“Sorry, mister. Heeh, as expected of the ducal family, you’re using a high-quality stone.”

Thanks to the three lights, I finally confirmed the place we were at right now.

What was illuminated were the countless barrels that were stacked to fill the mine tunnel.

“Haah, what is this...”

“Why are there so many barrels here, Harold...?”

“Aren’t they the smelted items? It’s a sludge that comes out when we separate metal from the ore.”

Gilbert and I tilted our heads, and Harold returned his answer as if struck.

But after answering, Harold’s expression turned cloudy as he racked his brain.

“This place... it should be a new mine, right?”

“Well... that’s how it should be.

But this, no matter how I look at this place, it’s abandoned.

I think that this is probably a waste mine somewhere in the Nibelheim territory.”

Harold approached the barrels as he said so, and overturned the angular light.

He checked the burning stamp on the surface of the barrels over and over again, and sighed deeply.

“As I thought. This is the sign of a trader who has a deal with my father.

Since a while ago, for the sake of fundraising, my father had undertaken the waste disposal of some vendors for waste management.

That is... ah, jeez, why did that person buy this waste himself!”

Harold who seemed to be unable to hold back his anger while talking, raised his voice.

When he kicked a barrel in front of him, the barrel rolled down the slightly slanted

tunnel, hit the wall and broke.

Harold seemed to become a little calmer after seeing the barrel broke down due to his impulsive anger.

He slowly lowered the fist that he had raised, and crouched down on the spot powerlessly.

[Gilbert.]

“O-ou, mister.”

Gilbert who was prompted by Tirnanog walked to the broken barrel.

He seemed to put the barrels scattered around the tunnel and their contents in order. Conceivably, he did it to give Harold space.

I stroked Harold’s back who was crouching while hiding his face.

It seemed that he endured his tears by gritting his teeth.

Still, he was stubborn and full of spirit. That was a relief.

Even so, I wondered how Earl Nibelheim could have been deceived.

Even an amateur could see that this was not a new mine.

Rather, as the Earl had a researcher’s mind, it should not be possible that he wouldn’t do a thorough investigation in advance.

Was there still some other trick?

“Wait, Botchan. Is there no Sorcery Tag in this place?”

Finished clearing the barrels, a voice raised from Gilbert who was looking around.

I also slowly held up the lamp over the wall of the tunnel.

“Maybe the contract hasn’t established yet?”

“No, Aniki, that’s weird.

Outside of this mine there was a Sorcery Tag as per the document said.”

Harold, who had regained his energy after a while, was investigating the surroundings. Eventually, there was no trace of Sorcery Tag found around us.

Since it was dangerous to get separated further, we regrouped at the place with magic circle at once.

“Hey, why don’t we investigate the magic circle at the entrance once?”

[That’s right. Even if we stay here any longer than this, we will not make any progress.]

“No, wait a minute. Let’s investigate the magic circle on this side.

It’s a pity to do many round trips using such uncomfortable transition magic circle.”

Gilbert kneeled and held the light of the lamp at the feet of the magic circle.

He followed the spell with one hand and read the contents, but it seemed that the visibility was bad and it wouldn’t be easy to make progress.

“Why don’t you try using Glam Sight?”

“Ah—, I’m not compatible with the demonic eye type of spells, the chanting is a bit too long...”

“Then I will lend you the wand.”

“Oh, I’m saved, Ojou-san. But, the demonic eye type of wands is expensive, right?”

“It’s fine if it’s only once.”

Gilbert raised a relieved voice.

Reading spells was a hard work.

Tirnanog took out the Wand of Glam Sight from the bag and handed it to me.

Now then, what should I do. I should extend it slightly.

I slightly rearranged the spell threads inside the wand and waved it only once.

Instead of the small magic circle of the regular Glam Sight, a magic circle that was covering all four of us was developed.

The pale green shining magic circle crumbled and fell like powdered snow.

It seemed that the spell permeated through the light of the magic circle easily and activated the Glam Sight normally.

“It’s a success.”

“Oh! This is Glam Sight!?”

“Extended range, huh. As expected from Ojou-san.”

We looked into the transition magic circle.

Thanks to the Glam Sight, Harold and I who hadn’t learned the magic of Hafan, were able to read the spell.

“Heeh... so it looks like this! The demonic eye type of wands is also interesting!”

“The performer of this magic is Heorot, and the right holder is Harold Nibelheim II.”

“What is set as the destination is... this coordinate, it should match the location of the entry portal in the County of Argene.”

[That means, the magic circle outside is the problem, huh.]

At the words of Tirnanog, we nodded.

Harold took out the joint key once again and activated the transition magic circle.

Soon, we emerged on the outside of the mine.

Gilbert was crouching and breathed deeply with a blue face.

It seemed that he was weak to transition sickness.

“Over here, the performer is also Heorot, and the right holder is also my father.”

“The coordinates of the transition destination are... huh? Gilbert-san, please look over here.”

“Hm, aah, what is it?”

I pointed to the destination of the transition magic circle.

The part where the transition destination coordinates should be incorporated was replaced by a strange form of spell.

“Hmm... this one is followed by this line... huh?”

[What’s the matter, Gilbert.]

“Everyone, look for the same symbol as this part. It’s supposed to be described somewhere in the magic circle.”

We searched for the same symbol as the one pointed by Gilbert.

Even with that, we had to decipher it by referencing many different locations and dividing our attention among these, riddling our progress with hardships.

It seemed as if it had intentionally been made to be difficult to read.

“This is weird. If the mage made the magic circle on the other side, he would want to construct a magic circle in the same format here.”

[It is intentionally obfuscated, huh.]

“That wasn’t all. The main coordinates of the transition destination are here, the County of Argene.”

“That’s impossible! We actually transited to the Nibelheim territory!”

Although it was a magic circle that transferred us to the mine of the Nibelheim territory, the coordinates that were recorded were of the Argene territory.

I had never heard of such randomly changing transition magic circle.

—No, I had.

(If you don’t follow the regular procedure, there will be a mechanism to transit you to another safe place.)

That was it. That was what Actorius-sensei had said.

I overwrote the Glam Sight that I was using and looked at the magic circle.

“What is it, Erica! Do you understand something!?”

“A conditional branch might have been built into this magic circle!”

[Ooh, that was what the gray mage said, huh.]

“Conditional branch! I forgot! You knew such a difficult technology well, Ojou-san.”

Gilbert turned the pages of his notebook, scribble patterns that were often

incorporated into conditional branches were written on the page.

Everyone had wide eyes like saucers as we checked the magic circle.

And then, just before the effect of the demonic eye disappeared, at last the contents of the conditional branch were picked up from the obfuscated magic circle.

“The conditional branch uses the authentication key in addition to the joint key, and the coordinates if you don’t use the authentication key...”

“As we thought, Botchan, Ojou-san! This coordinate is the County of Nibelheim!”

Gilbert raised his voice.

On the other hand, Harold’s expression was dark.

“Is the mage called Heorot who set up the transition magic circle an accomplice?”

“Whether he is from Lindis or Hafan, neither will forgive him.

Stuff like this gets you tracked and hunted to the end of the world, and put straight into jail.

Even if the sentence is over, he won’t be able to do magic work anywhere on this continent.”

[However, they weren’t able to arrest Gustav and the other merchants¹, right?

It’s impossible that this mage had not ran away.]

In other words, the authentication keys were no longer available.

This means that the transition magic circle only had the transit function to that waste mine left.

“Damn it...”

Harold squeezed out his voice.

With the expression as if he felt like running away, Gilbert cast his eyes downward.

“First of all we have to go to the Notary Guild with the result of this investigation.

If all the evidence is collected, not only the guild but also this country will move.”

Gilbert transcribed the up-to-date main points of the transition magic circle on a calf pelt paper.

When Tirnanog received the paper, he put it inside the bag carefully.

After we finished our investigation, once again we were swaying inside a horse-carriage and headed towards Knot Reed.

The air inside the carriage on the way home was heavy, and nobody tried to open their mouth.

¹ This is the first time they said it, but it seems that this is the name of the merchant that is suspected to be murdered by the real culprit. And I guess this Heorot guy too. Just like cutting a lizard's tail.

Also, I changed Cain Grendell to Cain Grendel. It seems that Grendel is the name of the antagonist in the Anglo-Saxon epic poem Beowulf. And Heorot is the name of the mead-hall that was built by King Hrothgar in the same poem. (Grendel, Heorot)

Chapter 75

A False Silver Vein (4)

By the time we arrived in the city, the sounds of the bell of the church that told us it was 10 am was echoing.

Given the preparation, I had to go back to Water Palace in about an hour.

Town of All Kinds of Goods just before the launching ceremony was crowded and flourishing.

Standing room were being rented at high buildings and the likes, and snacks and drinks that were easy to carry around everywhere were sold on the street for the spectators.

It was a festive mood different from Ignitia's, unique to the trade city.

I looked at Harold's appearance beside me.

His expression was dark and hard.

If there was nothing wrong, we would have been having fun together in that crowd.

"Boss, please bring us to the guild hall."

Gilbert gave directions to the coachman.

The coachman skillfully took advantage of back roads and detours to reach the guild hall while avoiding crowds.

The guild hall was close to the image of the Joint Government Building in my previous world.

I guessed the biggest difference was that there were private guilds inside the building.

The interior of the guild hall was refined, with base of white and gold, similar to the interior of Water Palace.

I wondered if the Turm family was also involved.

The walls of the central staircase were lining up with portraits of the personages of Knot Reed.

Among them were portraits of Gilbert and someone with facial features that closely resembled the owner of the wand store were mixed.

Gilbert guided us to a room that looked like a large conference room.

Although it was a conference room, it didn't feel dull and uninteresting, instead it was decorated to make it felt formal and dignified.

In the center of the room, there was a large and heavy oak table.

On the other side of the table, a special notary was waiting along with piled up documents.

"Bernhard-niisan, I'm counting on you."

"Gilbert, you... please do things in moderation. I will make an exception this time."

He seemed to be the seventh older brother of Gilbert.

He had the same pince-nez as the Turm elder, and his remaining hair was red.

Notary public Bernhard held out his hand as if demanding something.

Gilbert hurriedly took out the bundle of documents from his bag and handed it over to him.

Bernhard carefully confirmed that the papers were all present and sighed in relief.

Gilbert was sitting in front of Bernhard while Harold and I were seated on his left and right respectively.

Tirnanog kept standing behind me.

"Everyone, I apologize if our family's youngest child was being a bother.

So? Gilbert, you have come this far, there must have been some results, right?"

Gilbert told Bernhard about the details of this investigation.

That the destination of the transit was the waste mine in the County of Nibelheim.

About the malicious conditional branch that was secretly incorporated in the

transition magic circle.

When he finished talking about everything, Bernhard opened his mouth while writing something on his wax board.

“To tell you the truth, we have already heard of the fact that the transition destination has become the waste mine.

This morning, a contact from the property manager of the County of Nibelheim had turned up.”

According to Bernhard, it seemed that Earl Nibelheim had let his property manager conducted a confirmation on-site.

The Earl didn’t want to involve his son in every problem, and seemed to be working hard steadily behind the scene.

“Does that mean what we did were useless, Nii-san?”

“No, we were uninformed about the branching metastasis.

It seems that the property manager didn’t make detailed observations at the time of the investigation.

If this is true, the correspondence of the Turm Insurance Company side will also change drastically.

The likelihood is high that this will be treated as being 100% the fault of the merchant Gustav’s non-performance, rather than being pursued as a blunder being caused by the Earl’s carelessness.”

“Really!? Then, that means Tou-san can somehow get through this, right?”

Harold’s voice echoed brightly.

But Bernhard shook his head with a difficult expression.

“That’s not very likely, there are two problems here.

First, the camouflage of the transition magic circle that Gustav made the mage protégé make. This is very inconvenient.”

“Why is that?”

“Because of the problem with our domestic law, we cannot make a ruling on metastatic

magic just based on our private judgement.

It is necessary for this to be audited by Lindis and Hafan.

Turm can finally decide the amount of insurance money *after* taking into account the information obtained by Lindis and Hafan.”

“N-no way...”

Harold’s voice lost all animation.

Even if we proved that there was no negligence by Earl Nibelheim, this time another problem surfaced.

In this fraud case, there was a feeling that the more we struggle, the worse this situation would become.

“Oi, oi, Nii-san. If that is the case, people won’t trust Turm family.”

“Gilbert, say that to Eberhardt-niisan, not me.

Well, our insurance company is not as vicious as manticores.

We won’t pay the full amount, but we will do a temporary repayment of the insurance until the end of the audit.”

“Then, the Earl may have to consider reducing his operating ventures, huh... that’s tough, Nii-san.”

It was an adequate solution, but this was a harsh situation.

Wrinkles gathered between Gilbert’s eyebrows as well.

Bernhard kept on explaining it indiscriminately.

“There is other problem as well. It’s the nuisance fee for the successor of County of Argene.

Depending on the amount of the nuisance fee, even when taking into account the temporary insurance repayment and gains through reducing operating ventures, this may still leave Earl Nibelheim’s fundraising in a risky position.

The Earl Nibelheim’s business will slowly roll down the slope towards bankruptcy.”

This was where I would come in.

I didn’t want to add further troubles to Earl Nibelheim.

“Well... however, Nii-san. If we can buy some time, isn't there still a turning point?”

“In this case, he has received loans from various directions.

If the shareholders knew that it's unlikely that their funds will be paid back, many people would desire to annul and return the contract.

Bernhard declared so and I looked around.

Harold and Gilbert who had been silent exchanged looks with me.

I nodded and opened my mouth.

“Regarding the matter of the nuisance fee, please do not worry about it.

The successor of the County of Argene would most likely refuse to accept it.”

“Yes...?”

Bernhard opened his mouth halfway and stared at me.

He looked at Tirnanog who was holding himself back behind me and furrowed his brows.

Bernhard leaned his body towards Gilbert and beckoned him, exchanging words with low voices.

“Oi, Gilbert. By saying so, who is this lady?

I thought that she's an official from the County of Nibelheim, but when I think about it, her escort is too extravagant.

Is she actually an official related to County of Argene... no, Duchy of Aurelia?”

“Bernhard-niisan, I'm not allowed to speak about it, so please give me a break on this.”

Even though I was the subject of their secret talk, I could hear them clearly.

Or rather, hearing Gilbert's reply, wasn't the way he worded it pretty much the same as outright saying it?

When Bernhard returned to his original posture, he cleared his throat.

“Ehem... then, as a representation of the Notary Guild, I will confirm that with His Excellency Ernst to that effect.

After that, it will likely be up to the judgement of his esteemed daughter.”

Harold looked at me with a crying face.

I nodded back at him with a small smile.

“Yosh, in that case, the withdrawal of loan by the investors won’t happen immediately, Nii-san.”

“Most of the shareholders are merchants based in the West. This is due to the Duke of Aurelia’s reputation.

They will think that His Excellency showed compassion to the Earl of Nibelheim.”

Life lines were connected somehow.

The business situation would be difficult for a while, but it seemed we were able to prevent catastrophic ruin.

There was a relieved air flowing among us.

But the air also froze in the next words of Bernhard.

“However, there is one exception.

There is only one person who doesn’t consider the reputation of the Aurelia official or the trends of other investors.”

“T-that is...?”

“Margrave of Urs, Harlan Lucanrant.

He will not be swayed by anyone’s speculation, instead he will press the Earl of Nibelheim until he fulfills his contract.

He won’t give the finishing blow until the Earl is barely holding his ground at the critical moment.

Furthermore, the troublesome thing is that he is the biggest investor of the Earl.”

Bernhard shook his head with a grave expression.

Harold, whose few hopes were getting a beating, hung his head with a crushed appearance as if struck.

“Aah—... , so it’s that Harlan—...”

Gilbert looked up to the ceiling and muttered while sighing.

Be that as it may, the Nibelheim family's ruin couldn't be prevented without the aforementioned fundraising and reorganization of its industries.

If Harlan interfered with that, there would be no telling what the other investors would do.

"...I'm sorry that I cannot help you more, Gilbert, Harold-botchan."

"No, this is enough, Bernhard-niisan. Thank you."

Bernhard settled the papers and stood up.

His time as Gilbert's brother was over, he needed to return back to become the notary public.

And, sooner or later I had to meet up with Palug for the preparation of the launching ceremony.

As we left the conference room, Harold staggered and collapsed onto his knees.

Tirnanog quickly supported his body.

"Why, this kind of thing..."

Harold's muttered voice was getting hoarse and soon disappeared.

Chapter 76

Launching Ceremony (1)

I parted with Harold and the others and returned to Water Palace.

There was no more time as it was about an hour until the launching ceremony begins.

I felt guilty about being unable to stay by Harold's side who was in low spirits.

However, I trusted Gilbert and somehow managed to reluctantly excuse myself.

As we entered the room from the window as usual, Palug had already finished changing into my clothes and been waiting for us.

She had a relieved expression for a moment, and quickly turned into a cat and crawled out of the dress.

It was a changing clothes method unique to someone with the ability to transform.

[Jeez, I was wondering if you could make it in time~]

"I'm sorry. Because the fraud case is getting more and more serious and complicated.

The transition magic is being camouflaged, and there is a northern noble that is difficult to deal with."

[A camouflage? I want to hear it in detail.

It might be a specific hint for the camouflaging means of the altar that is in trouble.

...But, before that.]

Returning to her human form, Palug helped me changed clothes with a quick work that couldn't be followed with my eyes.

It was about twice the speed when I was dressed by a servant everyday.

In the blink of an eye, my outfit turned into the dress for the launching ceremony.

With bright blue fabric as the base, there were decorations made with frills embroidery and high-quality golden thread that formed waves.

“It’s important to be able to attend the launching ceremony. So let’s tie your hair and pick the accessories...”

“Palug can do anything, huh.”

“This is not my first time taking care of girls.”

She gathered my hair in a high position and tied them with a white and blue ribbon.

A necklace with a small sapphire head on a fine golden chain was around my neck distinctly.

As the finishing touch, to conceal my lack of sleep, a light makeup was put on my face until my complexion appeared nice.

It was finished with a bright refreshing image as a whole.

The only thing left was to wear a bright expression that matched this image. That was a tall order.

“Thank you. Palug.”

“Now, you should go before Ernst becomes suspicious. We’ll talk again later, okay?”

When the preparations were over, Palug once again turned into a kitten and sat at my feet.

Before I knew it, Tirnanog had also finished his disguise as a stuffed toy-size steel golem.

I changed places with Palug just in time, as my father was waiting by the door to head to the venue together.



Knot Reed’s wharf was turned upside down in confusion from the abundant people there.

The occupations of the visitors were varied, and they were crowding to see the launching ceremony from a better place.

They pushed aside the ropes and the city guards wearing ceremonial armor away.

Us participants were lined up on the opposite shore of the visitors, along the crimson carpet leading up to the shipyard.

Aligned on this side were the Ignitians and the neighboring aristocrats, powerful people in the town including the mayor, and the shipbuilders who work their hardest for this.

The shipbuilders were wearing high-quality clothes up to the lowest apprentices and everyone was proudly sticking out their chest.

In the shipyard where the curtain covering it was taken away and removed, there was an aircraft carrier waiting for the launching ceremony.

The new aircraft carrier seemed not to be a steel ship like its predecessor, but a huge wooden sailboat with a wide deck and five masts.

However, it seemed that golem powers were built inside, so it wasn't just a sailboat.

The aircraft carrier was placed on a foundation for sliding down an iron rail drawn to the sea.

The board which had prevented the hull from slipping had already been removed, and the only thing left was to cut the rope that held the ship.

The horn was reverberating grandly.

The nobles who were standing in a row drew their lips together and straightened their spines.

A few seconds later, the shipbuilders also stood upright immovable.

Ignitia knights marched on the carpet.

With Auguste at the lead, he was followed by knights and military band, the knights were carrying a wide ceremonial sword, while the flag-bearers were holding a battle flag.

Auguste wore ceremonial costume on top of his dark red uniform.

It was a dark-blue-almost-black velvety robe, embroidered with the crest of the dragon knights.

A sash with golden thread embroidery on the red background slung diagonally from his shoulder.

On his waist was a slender sword that seemed to be a ceremonial sword.

Auguste was wearing the spectacular and heavy costume without discomfort.

With the appearance of Auguste, the cheering sounds of the visitors came from the opposite shore.

It seemed that the women's cheers sounded louder in particular.

Apparently Auguste had dispelled his disgraceful reputation and seemed to have become popular with women.

Auguste was walking with a serious look, but loosened his lips a little bit when he passed in front of me.

I also met his eyes and responded with a smile.

Auguste went up to the podium placed in front of the aircraft carrier and turned around.

He first bowed to the visitors, and then to the aligned participants.

Waiting until the visitors quieted down, Auguste opened his mouth.

"I am deeply grateful that I can witness the launching of the new aircraft carrier on this fine day.

On the behalf of my father, Henry the King of Ignitia, I pray that God's blessing will be with the navigator of this aircraft carrier Metatronius."

Auguste declared with a loud voice.

A knight handed a treasure sword to him who went down the podium.

It was still a sword that seemed to be too big for the ten-year-old Auguste, but he was able to pull it out easily.

The raised blade was shining under the sunlight.

When Auguste swung down the treasure sword, the rope was cut in a single slash.

A solemn sound was reverberating like a rumble in the ground.

The huge hull slowly slid down the slope.

Loud cheers sounded, and the military band played a lively tune.

As the numerous crowds were watching, the aircraft carrier gradually accelerated and sent towards the sea.

At last the ship landed on the water, making a big splash.

The hordes of sea birds in the harbor were surprised and flew away at the same time.

Ten dragons and the dragon knights who urged them forward took off from the old-style aircraft carrier who had been anchored in the bay.

While circling the sky above the new aircraft carrier, the dragon knights scattered flowers of various colors.

Children were jumping up and down with their hands in the air, trying to catch the scattered petals.

Such a lovely sight could be seen in both the aristocrats and the spectators' side.

The dragons made a graceful land on the new aircraft carrier one by one.

When the launch and the transfer of the dragon knight troops had finished safely without any accident, the ceremony was over.

The visitors were dispersing, and many of them would be going to celebrate the new aircraft in the future.

The circumstances on the participants' side were also similar.

A number of boats arrived on the shore of the shipyard.

After this, we would change location to the deck of the new aircraft carrier, the party would start by gathering not only the relevant aristocrats but also the merchants of Knot Reed.



Many tables were brought in on the deck of the new aircraft carrier, and a lot of well-dressed people were sitting and talking.

At first I was thinking of greeting Auguste, but I couldn't find his figure.

I guessed he also had many things to do.

I went with my father to say hello to Ignitia and the northwestern lords.

While hiding behind a smile, I strained my ears for the talks about the silverware industry and the fraud.

However, the topic about the Earl Nibelheim never came out.

Were they not yet widespread or were they all looking at Otou-sama's attitude?

Come to think of it, I couldn't see the figure of Earl Nibelheim.

I caught a glimpse of him during the launching ceremony, so perhaps he was busy running around after the launching ceremony.

While chatting with the lords and the others including Viscount Turm, the prominent merchants of Knot Reed turned up.

I felt like they were examining the facial expressions of my father and I.

After all, the story of the mine fraud was already spreading and they were evidently observing for a reaction.

The reason why Otou-sama hadn't brought up the topic of the Argene territory with me may be to prevent any information leaking out through me.

Certainly, a regular 8-year-olds might have had a harder time keeping a secret, after all.

I followed Otou-sama's lead in adorning a poker face.

The topic shifted to the bidding of the aircraft carrier's outfit and equipment.

Although outwardly it was a formal bidding, with things like these it seemed that the consignment of who was assigned which parts was already decided beforehand.

So, the wealthy merchants entered a craze of hard selling of their self-made techniques and commodity.

Cheers could be heard suddenly near the bow.

The lords and merchants also temporarily suspended their negotiations that had been getting intense and looked up toward that direction.

"Auguste-sama!"

Auguste was riding a large dragon over several tens of meters and waved his hand.

He wasn't wearing his ceremonial costume, instead he had changed into clothing he could easily move in like his riding clothes.

It seemed that he didn't bring the small dragon Goldberry.

He stood up on the back of the dragon and let his body fall lightly.

A voice closed to a scream rose from the audience.

Several dragons came flying in a way that intersect with his falling course.

They took the falling Auguste on their wings.

It was just like bouncing on a trampoline.

Auguste softened the impact a couple of times in the same way, spun his body like a gymnast, and landed splendidly.

The audience applauded spontaneously and raised shouts of joy.

That surprised me.

As usual, he was a prince that was bad for my heart.

However, as expected of someone from the royal family, he really knew how to draw attention.

When I looked at the cat at my feet thinking that she had to be worried about him, she had a comfortable look.

It seemed that Palug had predicted this.

This was due to their long-standing relationship.

Otou-sama saw the state of Auguste who was surrounded by many people and gave a restrained smile.

"Good grief, he really is the same as His Majesty Henry."

"That's good, right, Otou-sama."

"Aa, His Majesty Henry will be relieved if this is the case. Truly, what a relief.

Erica must be worried too. Don't hesitate to go there."

Otou-sama stroked my head lightly and said so.

I bowed to my father and the others and headed for Auguste.

“Auguste-sama, I’m happy that you are in good health.”

“Yaa, Erica. I’ve been wanting to see you.

Everyone, I’m sorry for being rude immediately after arriving, but I will have to excuse myself.

I don’t want to keep my special friend waiting.”

Auguste bowed with a dramatic gesture, drew my hand and left the circle of people.

I apologized for depriving them of the most popular prince, but for some reason everyone was watching me with a warm smile.

Auguste and I brought the two phantom beasts accompanying me and moved to the vicinity of the ship’s bow.

The figure head seemed to imitate the figure of an angel, and when I looked down from the bow, I saw the wing parts were carved precisely.

When there were no people around us, Auguste showed an innocent smile suitable for a child of ten years old.

“I was saved, Erica. I didn’t think that it will raise so much attention.”

“Well, Auguste-sama. I thought that you want everyone to see you and made a flashy entrance.”

“No, no, if anything right now it’s more important to me to spend time with someone who knows my actual self.

To tell the truth, this princely mask, it doesn’t have any room to breathe.”

Auguste made a gesture as if putting on an invisible mask, creating a serious look.

I laughed at his silly gesture unintentionally.

“I came after bringing Goldberry to my room, actually.”

“My, my, in that case you must be having a hard time about the rumors of the Dragon Knight Prince in the town, too.

Is Goldberry not feeling fine?”

“Aa, no, Briar and Blumbell fell asleep, so she’s babysitting.

Those two have just been born.”

“I see.”

I thought of the appearance of the small Goldberry taking care of the hatchlings.

It was somewhat cute.

Palug who was looking up at Auguste also seemed to be happy.

“By the way, the launching ceremony just now was also wonderful, Your Highness.”

“Right~? I’m good as a cat at feigning friendliness, after all. You can praise me more, you know?”

“My, your true character is already jutting out of that cat, Auguste-sama.”

“Haha, that’s not good.”

Auguste smiled amiably as usual.

Palug was moving at his feet unnoticed.

She seemed to enjoy watching her former master from various angles.

A golden cat’s tail was standing upright, moving and swaying happily.

Yup, yup, it had been a long time, so she should enjoy herself to her heart’s content.

“To be honest, this ceremony was my first time doing something like this so I was incredibly nervous. It seems that I was able to trick them skilfully.”

“Yes, I was also tricked. Your Highness Auguste was very cool.”

As I responded with a smile, Auguste looked as if he was embarrassed.

He seemed to be bashful, for a change.

Auguste had an atmosphere of knowing the ways of the world, so this response that was suitable to his true age was very fun.

“That’s right! Do you want to see the result of the training I mentioned before?”

Auguste suddenly changed the topic as he hit his palm in sudden remembrance.

It seemed like he was flustered somehow.

Speaking of which, he was getting his training to become a Theurge from Professor.

“Is it the result of your training with Professor?”

“Aa, I want to try it out. It’s convenient for you to be here.”

Auguste said so and took my hands.

He was closing his eyes, praying silently, corrected our connected hands time and time again.

He seemed to be perplexed somehow.

“This is pretty difficult when the partner is an Aurelian... do you feel like something’s touching your spirit?”

“Well... no, there’s nothing like that.”

“Huh~, far from being able to enter, when I can’t even make contact with... right, let’s try reversing it.”

Apparently, Auguste seemed to be doing a trial and error.

I was in a state that didn’t know what he was doing right now at all.

When I tilted my head, suddenly there was a sensation as if a palm was touching me lightly.

“I wonder if this is sufficient. Close your eyes, Erica.”

I closed my eyes in accordance to Auguste’s words.

Huh? What, was I floating? But, my feet were on the deck properly.

There was a strong wind pressure that I shouldn’t be able to feel on my skin.

I felt like my body was thrown and cast away into the sky.

“Eeh...!?”

I was about to panic for a moment at the impossible sensation.

Auguste gripped my hands and I regained my composure.

“Calm down, take a deep breath once.”

When I breathed deeply as I was told, a sensation of ascending slowly flowed into me. I was connected with something outside of my body, it was as if feeling returned to me after having an anaesthesia wears off.

I opened my eyes abruptly even though I was supposed to close my eyes.

I could feel the heat of the sun with the ‘wings’ on my back.

There was the blue sky above my head and a sea of white clouds spreading like a snowy landscape before my eyes.

Chapter 77

Launching Ceremony (2)

When I noticed, I was a dragon.

...Or at least that was what I couldn't help thinking from the view that was spreading before me.

Under the expanse of the sky which continued until the edge of horizon, 'I' turned swiftly while receiving the wind on 'my' wings.

It wasn't only my sense of vision, but I could also feel the wind pressure struck my skin and wings, and hear the sound of the whirlwind.

Furthermore, I was still holding hands with Auguste on the deck of the aircraft carrier.

Surely, Auguste used the unusual power of Theurge, but—

What should I do, somehow the information flowing into my brain was too much for me to handle.

"Oops, sorry. I unintentionally transfer the entire thing.

I will reduce it a bit over to my direction."

Along with Auguste's words, the burden suddenly became lighter.

At the same time, the tactile and auditory senses of the dragon disappeared and only kept the visual information.

It felt like I was looking over the sky from a camera attached to a dragon.

In the meantime, the position of the camera gradually lowered backwards and became a viewpoint straddling the back of the dragon's neck.

"How about now?"

"Waa... Auguste-sama!?"

In a position that embraced me from behind, Auguste was also sitting there.

It was like a two-seater ride on a horse.

I rode on top of the dragon unknowingly, but it didn't feel like it, my hair and dress didn't flutter at all.

Perhaps this 'me' and 'Auguste' were only images that were not substantive to make it easier for the senses to be muted.

"An ancient dragon in the sky above this city lent me his eyes.

It seems that he was the Throne of the King of the olden days, in other words my ancestor, and decided to keep us company like this for nostalgia's sake.

I cannot take you to ride on top of a dragon with the real body, but there is a method like this."

"I think that this is very wonderful."

"Let's try to lower the altitude. Knot Reed seen from the sky is also beautiful."

After a span of a few seconds, the dragon with our images on top rotated his body around it's own length entering inverted flight.

The dragon commenced a steep descent into the sea of clouds as if diving into them back first.

Piercing through a layer of thick clouds, the visibility became clear at once.

A beautiful jade-colored canal rings spread below us, forming a geometrical figure.

The irregularly arranged orange roofs, when viewed from above Knot Reed, seemed like crystals.

The way the large and small boats traveling through the canals and bays made me feel like I was currently looking into an elaborate machine.

The light of the lighthouse could be seen through the mist that was hanging over the sea in intervals.

Lots of wagons and people were crowding in the Town of All Kinds of Goods, and it seemed that it was also prospering today.

"Since this is a rare moment, take a look at whatever you like. I will focus it for you."

"Yes."

Prompted by Auguste, I concentrated on the visual information.

First of all, this.

Find a ship that stood out among the many ships floating in the bay.

The new aircraft carrier we were riding.

As if nestling close to the new aircraft carrier, another slightly smaller aircraft was beside it.

Compared to the old model, the new type seemed to be two or three times larger.

I could see myself and Auguste on the other side.

It was a strange feeling to see my own figure from the sky with my own eyes.

There were also the figures of Tirnanog and Palug at our feet.

I waved my hand reflexively, but when I thought about it carefully, the other side should only be able to see the dragon.

“Do you understand the trick?”

“Yes. Somehow.”

“You’ve got a knack for this, so let’s try it out in greater succession.”

I took a closer look at the city of Knot Reed as I was told.

After a few seconds of staring, the vision zoomed in to the distance at once as if I were right above the crowd of people.

Even if the time lag due to Auguste’s response was subtracted, the eyes of a dragon were frighteningly high-function.

I looked at Water Palace which was easy to find at the moment.

It was a beautiful building even from the sky.

Perhaps Harold’s father, Earl Nibelheim, was running around somewhere inside, but as expected I couldn’t see through the building.

In the square in front of the palace, the monks who seemed to live in the nearby church were playing with the neighborhood’s children.

I moved to the guild hall which was the next conspicuous building.

Bernhard, the notary public, was in the square in front of the guild hall and was stopping a horse-drawn carriage.

It seemed that the man who was steering the horse carriage was the elderly coachman who was said to be favored by Turm family.

When Bernhard got into the carriage, he removed his pince-nez and polished it with a cloth.

I couldn't read the documents on his lap, but were they related to Earl Nibelheim as well?

As I kept following the canal, I arrived at Barker Street.

I saw a woman with red braid pursuing a barrel that seemed to have been thrown off balance.

She was the perfumer Bell that had scattered the bergamots before this.

The one that stopped the barrel was Gilbert who had something like a sandwich in one hand.

After the two gazed at each other for a while, Gilbert averted his eyes awkwardly.

I was somewhat curious about their speech, but as expected even the dragon's ears wouldn't pick up those voices, would they?

At Crucible Street, I could see Harold who was in low spirits loitering in front of the wand store.

The store owner who was yawning as he came out to put up the 'currently preparing for business' sign found him.

With a stern face but a gesture that somehow transmitted gentleness he ushered him inside the shop with a push.

There were children meeting at the bridge between Crucible Street and Goblin Street. Everyone had a fishing rod in their hands.

A lanky boy was waving his hand to get the others to come along, and they kept running while laughing.

In Crescent Moon Street two bridges away from Goblin Street.

Sergei, Harold's acquaintance, was carrying a packed box of potions into a pharmacy-like store.

Speaking of which, he was a potion maker.

Sergei shrugged his shoulders with a strained laugh to the pharmacy's shopkeeper's gestures that looked as if he was gulping a beer mug.

Three girls in uniforms, who seemed to be the clerks of some sort of business, were buying some sweets by pooling their money together.

It seemed that the proprietress, who seemed to be a baked-confectionery seller, increased the number of the candies one for each of them as a service.

The girls were walking away while chatting after thanking the proprietress.

The cookies they got were in human shape, similar to the one I ate when I was given the magic lecture.

I wondered if that woman was the one called 'Gizella-obasan'.

Gizella's store seemed to be popular, and customers ranged from adults to children were constantly visiting.

In the miniature-like city, everybody's livelihood was alive.

Since I was watching from the dragon's point of view, everyone felt cute.

Just as I was thinking about such a thing, I could feel my head was becoming heavy again.

"...It seems that you will reach your limit soon. Take a deep breath."

Auguste's palm covered my eyes on the image.

In the darkness, I slowly took a deep breath.

I felt that I gradually returned to my own body, which felt far away.

I finally felt like I got my feet back on the ground.

When I opened my eyes, Auguste let me go in a relieved state.

The moment I was released, exhaustion suddenly washed over me.

Although I didn't notice it when I was absorbed in the experience, it seemed that it was a considerable burden even when it was only the visual sense.

"I'm sorry I didn't notice that it was a burden on your body."

“No, I’m happy that you have showed me something rare.

Auguste-sama always sees such a beautiful world, huh.”

When he heard my words, a proud smile showed on his face.

“Can you use this Theurge technique to be in complete control when you do it by yourself?”

“Well, if I am compatible with the dragon, I can share senses with them for hours.

It seems that I will be able to do something like what Professor did before long, but I haven’t actually experienced it personally.”

“Really.”

“But, it’s pretty difficult if it the other party is a human.

If the other party is not conscious of me, defenseless, and compatible—”

Auguste raised his right hand straight.

Then, ten people who were chatting on the deck raised their right hand at exactly the same timing.

“In this way, I can interfere with just a bit of action at a harmless level.

It’s difficult if the person is conscious of me or has a magic defense.

Since the compatibility is generally bad with the Visitor’s Clan, it seems that it is useless unless I use my full power while in direct contact with the person.

If even that doesn’t seem to work, I have to invite their spirit to my side.”

“I see...”

“It’s fine. You don’t need to worry, I won’t use this power for wrongdoings. Probably anyway.”

“Don’t pretend, as if you would actually do such things to begin with.”

“Erica is kind, for you to have such faith in me.

Even if I look like this, I may be a devil, you know?”

“No, no, you’re a self-proclaimed angel, right?”

Towards my reply, Auguste burst out laughing.

While looking up at the cheerful prince, Palug who was at our feet looked happy.

“Oops, you must be tired, sorry for keeping you here for too long.

I will be the one to tell Sir Ernst, so you’d better take some rest in the cabin.”

“Thank you for your thoughtfulness.”

“You also come again~. Next time I’m going to pat you a lot, so prepare yourself, okay~?”

Auguste lifted Palug and tickled her under her chin.

Palug narrowed her eyes pleasantly in Auguste’s arms.

Auguste called a servant and asked him to guide us.

I took Tirnanog and Palug and left the deck behind.

Chapter 78

Launching Ceremony (3)

In a certain cabin of the new aircraft carrier, I took a little break.

I sneaked into a cabin without people, and had a rest on the soft and luxurious sofa.

Palug climbed up the backrest of the chair.

[Haah... Auguste, so splendid.]

“That’s true, he seems to be in such a radiant mood as though he has gotten rid of an evil spirit¹.”

[Right... huh? That way of saying, am I the evil spirit!?

Aaah... the fact that is not incorrect is so vexiiiiing!!]

“Now, now, it wasn’t only Palug that afflicted him, so calm down.”

I inadvertently dissed Palug.

What afflicted him was not only the spirit possession by Palug, but also the so-called worldly scandal and bad reputation.

Either way, Palug who possessed him was a guardian angel, so she didn’t have to worry about it.

[Even so, Auguste has become a very splendid young man during the time I don’t see him~.

He is likely to grow up exactly like my King Guillaume~.

I’m sure, when he reaches adulthood, he will definitely become a beautiful youth, so you need to book him soon~ ... wink, wink.]

“Why are you talking in onomatopoeia?

Did Auguste really has changed that much?”

He was supposed to changed so much six years in the future, whether it was to become

a feminine man or host-style.

It seemed that I couldn't notice his minor changes over several months because of those images of him in my brain.

If Palug's disguise was accurate, I felt like he would become the second King Guillaume.

[It's not that~. Surely the growth of his heart can be seen in various places and his expressions~~.

I cannot repress feeling it's a shame I couldn't see the growth of that child up close.]

"Is that so?"

[Yeah, that's right~.

Aah, Auguste ought to make a lot of achievements in the future.

And so, as artists compete with each other, they would make paintings and sculptures based on the beautiful prince, and I can please my eyes.]

"Palug..."

I shrugged my shoulders while watching the former angel who was out of control.

Well, recently things had been depressing, so it was important to have fun more than anything else.

Anyway, Tirnanog who usually made a comment was quiet.

I observed him with the corner of my eyes to check whether his condition was bad or not.

Tirnanog seemed to be thinking about something with his arms folded.

He stared at Palug for a while and then hit his palm.

[Mu! That's it! I should have known that we can make that thing. Erica. I will borrow the cat for a bit.]

[Eh~? What is it, what is it? For the serpent to borrow my help, isn't it too unusual for you?]

"What's wrong, Tir? Have you come up with something?"

[Fufufu. No, I sometimes think that I should try to do a mock-alchemy.]

When Tirnanog invited Palug to his hand, he began to consul about something with a whisper.

For Tirnanog to negotiate with Palug with a warm attitude was unusual.

[... So once I do this, you follow up like this.]

[Hmm~~? Is that fine? You're going to become a charred lizard. Although you are already black originally.]

[Do not hold back. If you're going easy on me, we would likely fail instead.]

[Hrrrm... I don't understand what you're talking about, but okay.]

Apparently, their consultation seemed to have ended.

Tirnanog picked up a drinking glass that was in the room and put something like black powder in it.

And then, he deformed his armor through his magical power.

The armor's fingers were stretched out in front of him and the space inbetween the digits connected as with fin webbing.

He held the glass in his transformed hands as if wrapping them around it, shutting them airtightly.

[Come on, do it.]

[I'm not responsible of what is going to happen, okay~?]

Palug placed her paw on Tirnanog's hands.

There was a sizzling sound like dropping water on a heated iron plate.

The part of the armor that was touched by Palug became heated and red.

Wait, was this really okay?

[Fumu, heat it up just a little bit more.]

[You seem to be unexpectedly calm. Then how about this?]

Tirnanog's whole armor shone red.

It seemed that it was heated by an outrageously high temperature.

[Alright, it's almost done. Good work, cat.]

[Good grief. Just what are you making me do when I'm still recovering. I won't forgive you if it's something boring.]

[Kukuku, just look forward to seeing it.]

At the same time as Palug releasing her hands, I began to hear sounds like liquid moving at high speed from Tirnanog.

The armor which was red returned to its original black color.

When Tirnanog created openings across his armor, steam blew vigorously from there.

Apparently, it seemed Tirnanog had used his own liquid-form body as substitute for coolant, circulating it along the armor to cool down on the inside.

[Now, it's done. You can see it.]

Tirnanog opened his palms.

We looked into his hands.

[Oh my, this is a nostalgic color.]

There was a single glass bead.

It wasn't a transparent glass used for material, but rather an indigo blue glass.

It was somewhat similar to marbles and it was a bit nostalgic for me.

Huh? But, the blue glass of this world—

(Aah, it seems that the colorant to make superior blue glass is Gigantia's specialty. There are old blue glasses, but they are gradually becoming impossible to repair.)

Oh yeah, right, Auguste said that at the cathedral on the Island of Messenger.

Because it was made of rare minerals produced by the enemy country, it was rare to make it.

Because of that, stained glass couldn't be repaired.

"Tir, where did you get the pigment? Or rather, when did you get it? You have been

with me all the time.”

[Erica. You should have also seen it... something exactly like it.]

Tirnanog brought out a black powder wrapped in cloth.

The cloth seemed to be the cut end of the bandage he used for his disguise, but what was this black powder?

It looked like a compound that contains metal.

Speaking of the metal we recently found, it was that, huh.

“Is this the smelt that was kept in barrels with the waste mine of Nibelheim?”

[That’s right. When that redhaired brat kicked down the barrel, I thought that I could use it for something and borrowed it for a while.

This oxidized cobalt was also used for variety of purposes by the former Visitor’s Clan.]

“So the identity of the expensive pigment is cobalt oxide, huh.”

I didn’t think of it when I was in the mine.

Tirnanog was able to properly recognize the smelt in that darkness.

[Heeh. With this, we can restore the stained glass of the church, right?

You were working hard for the sake of Ignitia, this is a glorious achievement for a serpent.]

[No, this is not only for the sake of the royal family in South.

Erica, if my memory served me right, the blue glass material can be traded at a high price, right?]

“Ah! That’s right! It’s about twenty times the price of silver of the same weight!”

I felt that Auguste had said that about the market price.

Then, far from being a mountain of waste, wasn’t it a mountain of treasure?

But, I wondered if it would go smoothly.

[If they sell all the contents of those barrels, the ruin of Nibelheim family might be averted.]

“Wait, the buyers might not be available immediately for such amount.

Because there is a demand for the restoration of stained glasses, I think that Ignitia will soon come to terms, but if the cobalt is sold as much as what is necessary for the repair, then it is likely that its market price will gradually drop as the supply is overdelivered.”

[Mu? Really. This is quite difficult.]

Even if we overestimated and assumed that we would sell them all as a replacement for silver, there wasn't that much demand for it.

First of all, we needed to find demand for cobalt oxide somewhere other than stained glass.

[How about paints?]

“Since for blue they have lapis lazuli... subtracting painters who have patrons, paints that are twenty times as expensive as silver are too harsh for ordinary painters.”

[Sorry, Erica. I thought that it could be useful even a little.]

“Well, I think that it's much better thinking Nibelheim is hoarding rare metals rather than a mountain of waste.

I think this will be enough for the immediate fundraising, so it's not totally useless. So I'm grateful.”

However, we couldn't seem to think of ways to effectively utilize it.

It might be better to borrow the wisdom of Harold and Gilbert.

Also, I wanted to let Harold know quickly and tell him that there was hope even if it was just a little.

“Let's change places with Palug and meet up with Harold. I want to hear the opinions of other people.”

[Got it. However, it's boring to keep staying at this party.

I will tell Ernst that I decided to return to Water Palace early.]

Palug made a turn and transformed into me wearing an identical dress.

Tirnanog also opened the bag and took out a spare clothing.

I brought it only just in case, but that was the right decision.

[That's right. That is true indeed. I ought to ask that guy what he was going to use it for, too.]

"That guy?"

[There was someone who noticed the value of this smelt even before I did.

Like me, that guy brought back a handful of smelt.

He looked at the cobalt oxide and made an expression that looked as if he had found his long-lost brother.]

I was taken by surprise and looked back towards Tirnanog.

If that was true, that person was likely to know of methods to utilize cobalt oxide that we didn't know.

It might become a trump card to save Nibelheim territory.

[Kukuku, hurry, Erica. I am also interested in what that guy is going to make.]

Tirnanog's eyes were shining ominously, and he laughed while showing his sharp teeth.

¹ Getting rid of evil spirit: an expression in Japan, they said that evil spirit is the source of disaster and by getting rid of them, you return to your normal state. In other words, getting rid of what troubles you. But, since it coincides with Palug's situation back in the second arc, she felt slighted lol.

Chapter 79

Secret Workshop (1)

We were running through the Crucible Street at dusk.

Just as the last chimes of the church's bell were resounding, Tirnanog and I arrived at Turm Wand Store.

It was to meet Gilbert, not Harold.

The other person who noticed cobalt oxide was said to be Gilbert.

It was difficult to say whether or not he was going to be inside the wand store, but it was better than looking for him blindly.

[As usual, there is no sign of a customer.

The store owner doesn't seem to be in the store, but there is a sign of the redheaded brat.]

"That's rather convenient."

Even when I went inside the store, no one came out to greet me.

Looking around, Harold was polishing the shelves quietly with an almost dead facial expression.

He shouldn't have to clean anything at times like this.

No, perhaps it was more painful for him if he didn't distract himself by doing something.

"Harold, are you okay?"

"Ah...? Aa, Erica, welcome.

What is it? Have you found a wand that match your taste?"

"You don't seem to be fine. Unfortunately, we're not here as a customer."

[Is Gilbert in the back?]

"Aniki? Aa, Aniki came back a while ago.

It seems he was going to make something difficult that he couldn't afford to fail, so

right now he's shutting himself inside the storehouse, but..."

After all, it was as we expected.

When I exchanged looks with Tirnanog, he nodded.

"Harold, this is something you also need to hear. Let's go together, okay?"

[Even if you say no I will force you to come with us.]

"Eh, ah, wait... , the store! There is only me manning the store!"

"We are your only customers in these two days, right?"

"T-that's true, but! Aah, jeez, let me lock the door first at least!"

As Tirnanog manhandled him, Harold was kicking and struggling.

We let him go to lock the store, then we headed to the storehouse in the back of the store.



"Yo, everyone, what's the matter?"

Gilbert seemed to have just completed the preparation, and was about to clear up the alchemy tools spread on the desk.

I glanced at the container placed on the desk.

Gilbert quickly hid it in his bag.

Again, Gilbert seemed to be keeping secret about the blue pigment that he had found.

Because Harold knew nothing, so somehow it felt like that.

In a sense, it could be said that we met him just in time.

It would be difficult to meet him after he went somewhere else to make it.

Tirnanog rolled an indigo blue glass bead on the table.

Gilbert reached for it with a relieved expression.

Tirnanog's hand caught his stretched hand with a lightning-quick movement.

[As expected, I knew you would recognize it at a glance.]

“We come to talk about it.”

When Tirnanog and I pressed him, Gilbert cast his eyes down and laughed.

“Hahaha, you caught me. Even though I thought that I would be able to evade questions until the prototype was completed.

Not only you are aware of the identity of the smelt, you seem to be able to make the actual thing in just a few hours.

As expected from the daughter of the head of the alchemists. You cannot be measured by ordinary means.”

Gilbert muttered thoughtfully.

No, no, it was because my friend was a phantom beast, I myself was just an ordinary and mediocre girl.

But I couldn't say that.

“W-wait, what are you talking about! Are you leaving me out of loop?”

[Wait, wait, Harold. Let's explain it in order. I will let Gilbert explain it.]

“Mister, so you're leaving it all to me.”

Gilbert smiled bitterly and lowered his hip back on the chair again.

When he put the container in his bag back to the table, Tirnanog released his hand.

Gilbert breathed a sigh while gazing at the glass bead through the light of the lamp.

“Aah, after all it's a fine coloring.”

“Is it a blue glass? It's certainly rare to see such a thing.

What's up with this glass?”

“This was made of the waste inside the barrel that was kicked off by Botchan.”

[To be exact, I made a blue-colored glass rather than the glass itself.]

“Hee...?”

“This is a rather rare metal on this continent called cobalt oxide.

Far from a waste, it seems to be worth twenty times that of silver of the same weight.”

“E, eeeehhhhh—!?”

Harold cried out with his eyes wide open.

He had to be surprised because what he thought was just a waste turned into treasure.

“That... what a coincidence.”

“Indeed, it’s an amazing coincidence.

Surely the proportions of the metals contained in the ore deposit and the smelting method thought of by Earl Nibelheim have ended up producing this result.”

“You mean, if we sell this rare metal called cobalt oxide, we can regain even the loss of the fraud!?”

“I wonder about that.”

“Well, that’s what one would think. That’s why I couldn’t say it.”

Harold who recovered from his shock raised a voice full of joy.

Gilbert and I shrugged and exchanged glances.

“It’s not about how much you can sell, the problem is how to sell it.

For example, if you sell it as a material for blue glass, there is only a limited demand.

If you sell it to the temples, churches, and part of the aristocrats and merchants, the consumption will reach the limit.”

“If they know that cobalt oxide can be made as long as the silver ores in the northwest areas haven’t been exhausted yet, its value will be lower than it is currently.”

“No way...”

“You shouldn’t sell the cobalt oxide itself, but the added value born by it.

Just as how the Nibelheim territory isn’t just selling a mass of high-purity silver, but a high-quality silverware.”

“Hahaha, you are still a child but you sure know your stuff, Ojou-san.

That’s why I also thought that I want to pitch in and help my important younger brother.”

[After all, what kind of person are you, Gilbert.

You are not just an ordinary youngest child of a wealthy merchant.]

“I’d like to return those words to mister as it is.”

Gilbert smiled wryly at Tirnanog’s pointed question.

“To begin with I didn’t collect the smelt for some insight I had.

When I used analysis magic because I was worried whether harmful substances were mixed, I discovered it by chance.

But mister, you didn’t use any magic or anything.

You are not just an ordinary escort of a duke’s daughter.”

[I am a very ordinary guardian. And my old friend was a famous alchemist.]

Tirnanog continued to sidestep the question without lying as usual.

Gilbert shrugged his shoulders at his response.

[What were you doing before you returned to this place?]

“I was pursuing my dream. It took me ten years for that dream to come true halfway.”

“Specifically, what is that dream?”

“That is... well, I will show you. Keep it a secret, okay?”

Gilbert took out the white silk packet from his bag.

He gently put the somewhat flat packet on the table and carefully unwrapped it.

What appeared from the white silk fabric was a white plain dish.

It wasn’t pure white, it was tinged with a faintly pure and translucent bluish color.

When it was looked under the strong yellow-colored light, the whiteness felt more prominent.

“Is this porcelain?”

“Correct. As expected from the duke’s daughter, you can recognize it at a glance.”

No, it was just that in my previous world porcelain was not unusual.

I couldn't say it though.

"Ooh~, certainly, this is similar to the dishes Master is collecting!"

"Right, right, this is similar to that dish.

There is a broken one in that collection, right?"

"It is a dish with a picture of a beast."

"Actually, the one who broke it was me."

Harold was frozen in shock for a moment, his chair moved back a few centimeters.

I understood his surprise.

Even if it was a used item in pristine condition, it was at least worth a castle.

When he saw our reactions, Gilbert laughed with an expression like a mischievous boy.

"Uwah... that kind of thing... Aniki, I guess you were very angry?"

"You'd think so. But actually it was a bit different.

Maybe because I was a child that born when my old man was already old, I was very spoiled."

Gilbert murmured in nostalgia that he was a brat in those days.

It seemed that he felt a sense of satisfaction by feeling cherished from the reaction, as he did various mischiefs to attract his father's attention.

At some point, he himself forgot the reason why he broke a dish that was the Turm elder's precious dish.

He would only know about it after a long time had passed, but it was a dish that was expensive enough to be able to buy a small southern island with one piece of it.

Nevertheless, there was no wrinkle between the eyes of the Turm elder.

"Instead, he was worried whether or not I got hurt."

From the eyes of Gilbert who was only a child at that time, he also found that the eyes behind those lenses were sad.

Although he was trying hard to care about his child, Gilbert seemed to have received

the impression that he had somewhat emptied a hole in the heart of Turm elder. Perhaps, it might have been a dish that had been cherished next to his thirteen sons. Thinking so, Gilbert became frightened and thought to apologize again.

“So, I said it clearly.

‘When I become an adult, I will make the same dish’, I said.”

Turm elder was furious when he heard those words.

You don’t have to risk your life to make that kind of thing.

Use your time and talent for more meaningful things.

When he raised his voice as he said this, Turm elder gazed at Gilbert with eyes that had a deeper anguish than when the plate broke.

“That was the only time my old man yelled at me.”

I guessed he was probably worrying about Gilbert’s future.

However, on the contrary, Gilbert’s heart was captured by the existence of porcelain.

He wanted to triumph over his old man by any means. And then, he wanted Turm elder to laugh as he saw the dish that he made.

“That’s why, I purposely chose a porcelain collector that was particularly on bad terms with my old man, and got myself a patron.”

It was said that the noble was a powerful aristocrat from Ignitia.

Without telling anyone, Gilbert got on a ship to the South and left Knot Reed.

“I used that noble’s connections and enrolled in Lindis under a pseudonym.

It was a short and exciting free time to learn the minimum necessary knowledge and skills.

After I got a personal laboratory in Ignitia, it was a life that would make me wanted to say that it was a confinement.

Well, I thought that it was not bad, since I finally able to make *this*, with my youth as the compensation price.”

“Wait, Aniki... don’t tell me, the white porcelain alchemist that is rumored to be fleeing an Ignitia aristocracy is...?”

“Because I was nearly killed. What is it called, research policy disagreement?”

Gilbert was wearing cordovan shoes.

According to Harold, those were the Ignitian aristocratic shoes.

I didn’t notice until I was told, but the hint had been there forever.

“I wanted to reproduce the blue in my memory, but he wouldn’t let me.

That person wanted to have a collection of levels that he could appreciate.

But, I wanted to reproduce the technique in its complete form.

I wanted to revive the ancient colors on this one. I wanted to make the real deal, not an imitation.”

Gilbert looked towards the South in nostalgia for a moment.

He seemed to be feeling some respect and sincerity for his Ignitian aristocratic patron.

It might have been a strong feeling to the degree that it wouldn’t go away even if he got killed.

“Just a little bit longer, and I might have to say goodbye to my neck and torso. But it seemed that my luck had not run out yet.

I was able to escape due to the great chaos caused by the prince.

When I was desperately running away, I had no destination in mind, but for some reason I reached my hometown, Knot Reed.”

The rumors about the white porcelain alchemist seemed to have been true.

He was able to escape by taking advantage of the massive mental interference because he was Gilbert, whose blood was a mix of the eastern mage and the Visitor’s Clan.

One never knew what will change things for the better in which ways, huh.

Gilbert picked up the blue glass bead that was rolling in the corner of the desk and held it up to the light.

[That blue is the blue that is in your memory, right.]

“Aa, that’s right, mister... if this is the case, it can be reproduced.”

[The blue you were looking for was in your hometown this whole time.]

“It’s an ironic thing...”

Gilbert closed his eyes and placed the blue glass on the table.

Taking a deep breath, he opened his eyes with a serious look.

“Say, Aniki, can this be produced in our territory?”

“Aa, it can. As long as one knows how to handle the furnace. I have spent my life for that.”

“Then, if this story spreads, there will be no lenders that will withdraw their money from the Nibelheim family!?”

“No, you need the actual things, not just lip-service.

Just as how I resigned to talk when confronted with Ojou-san’s blue glass.”

Harold’s bright voice and expression finally came back, and Gilbert backtracked.

“I wanted to make money for furnace and pigments somehow and tried to sell the white porcelains that I had.

But, not even one was sold.

It seems that a scam aimed at an antique art dealer was rampant some time before I came.

The scrutiny for artworks in the northwest area has become considerably severe.”

“No way...”

“Oi, oi, Botchan. Don’t be looking like that. I didn’t say that I cannot do it.”

“But, Aniki. Even if you start making porcelain from now, ultimately you won’t be able to make it in time...”

“No, that’s not true.

Oops... it’s going to be done heating up soon.”

Gilbert murmured so and stood up.

Huh? Didn't porcelain take more weeks to make?

Harold looked up at Gilbert with an absentminded blank expression.

I was certain that I was making a taken aback face that wouldn't lose out to him.

"This is just right. Everyone, follow me.

I will show you the magic that I... no, *we* assembled over a decade."

That said, Gilbert laughed a lot with confidence.

Chapter 80

Secret Workshop (2)

We went with Gilbert to the upstream of Varnalis River at night.

Trading the horse-drawn carriage with a small boat en route, we boarded a flat-bottomed ship heading upstream at a harbor on the outskirts of the town.

Loaded on this flat-bottomed ship were various everyday commodities to be delivered to the village upstream.

Pulled by a horse in the towpath made on the shore, it traced a gentle flow upstream.

Gilbert sipped a glass of mulled wine that the crew had shared, and exhaled deeply, breathing out white vapor.

Harold and I who were still children were given a heated spice apple juice.

The cinnamon and ginger warmed our body from the core.

“On the evening of the day I arrived at Knot Reed, I went up the river like this.

It’s only been seven days since then, huh... thanks to Botchan and you guys, it’s been days that were rich in experience.”

“But, Aniki, if you were going up the river by yourself, wouldn’t it be better using the land route?”

Harold put a damper on Gilbert who was looking into the riverside in nostalgia.

“There was a package that I wanted to carry in, so I had to use a ship.

From the results of my many years of research, I knew that the local whetstones were ideal for porcelain materials.

Since they were as cheap as dirt, I bought up all the whetstones that were in the market.”

“Heeh, a whetstone, huh... hm, huh? Buy up?”

[Speaking of which, you told us that the market price of whetstone is rising.]

“Aniki, so that was your doing, huh...”

Harold glared at Gilbert with accusing eyes.

He did say that he was repairing a rotating whetstone of the confectionery store.

Perhaps, other bad effects of whetstones shortage might have come out.

“Eh, what? Why are you angry?”

“Nothing—. It’s just that Aniki’s actions result in a lot of troubles this week—.”

“Now, now, I don’t know what happened, but it’s fine, right?”

Because of my foresight, I made use of them in the production of porcelain with painted cobalt oxide.”

At Gilbert’s words, Harold became silent begrudgingly.

There was no doubt that he was saved by it, so he couldn’t say anything.

“Well, rather than foresight, it’s more due to my excessive obsession, really.

We can sell the white porcelains to eastern business partners, where they are still popular.

Even though I know that fact with my head, since my heart wouldn’t be on board I wouldn’t be able to put my all towards making those.”

[But thanks to your extra insistence, the material is not wasted, and everything goes well.]

“Right, right, mister. You say some good things.”

Gilbert’s mood got better thanks to Tirnanog’s words.

Harold’s staring seemed to show that he was still dissatisfied.

“Tsk, things are going just fine for Aniki, huh... but, is it possible to sell it that conveniently in the East?”

“It was the opinion of my partner at the time I was in the South.

That guy didn’t agree with my hobby, but he has a considerable aesthetic sense.

He is quite favourable as a partner, well, I think it’s fine to trust his judgement.”

The East had an elegant and sophisticated culture, yet they preferred simple things. A pure white porcelain might be better suited to the taste of eastern people than a porcelain with flashy and gorgeous paintings on it.

“Is that partner of yours possibly a mage of Hafan?”

“Aa, I was in charge of alchemy, that guy was in charge of magic and he was studying to combine East and West techniques.

Although I got separated from that guy due to *that* event, but the scroll entrusted to me by him is even now still my partner.”

Gilbert said so, his nose sniffing whether due to the cold or sentiment, and looked up to the dusk sky.

I raised my face to follow his line of sight.

In the dark sky without the moon, the stars were shining brightly.

At this time, in that direction I could see the first magnitude stars of Lupus and Canis Minor.

Then, on the underside there were the red stars that made up Cancer.

Gradually lowering my line of sight from the three constellations, I noticed that a huge shadow was towering.

It was a tall tower that looked as if it was touching the sky.

There seemed to be windows around the tower, and several small orange lights were lit up.

“The tower has come into view at last. Boatman, please drop us off this shore.”

“Ou.”

As the ship stopped, we got off to the riverside.

It was around 8 o'clock in the evening, but because there was no moon, the field of vision was much darker.

Each of us lit a lamp or lantern.

“It’s a splendid castle. Is it the residence of a nobleman around here?”

“Nn~, well, that kind of stuff... Botchan will be able to tell you more about it, right?”

“Oh my, Harold will?”

“No, rather than explain better... ah—, that’s my place.”

Harold averted his eyes while scratching his cheek.

No, it wasn’t in the level of ‘my place’, right?

“That castle of ours is called <Castle of Light>.

It’s an old castle built on the rocky side of the bank of Varnalis River, characterized by a very tall tower.”

“The one that built that tower was the Turm family who migrated here.

If you think about it, Turm and Nibelheim are often connected to each other.”

“Anki, if you say that, practically all noble families and companies in Knot Reed are connected with each other.”

“Hahaha, that’s true.”

Harold and Gilbert laughed with each other after saying so.

Indeed, it seemed that the whole Knot Reed had a friendly atmosphere like some kind of family or relatives.

“There is nothing special, it’s just an ordinary rural castle.

When the weather cleared up, we can see the unbroken view of the town, so it’s not bad.”

“That’s nice.”

“Aa, that’s right. When this matter has settled down, shall we meet together and hold a feast?

Since there is no budget, we will be eating food a little and having fun, it will be just a modest thing.”

A celebratory feast while watching the night view of Knot Reed might be a good proposal.

Although it was said one shouldn’t count one’s chickens before they had hatched, as

long as I kept my nerves tightly bound up, even if I relaxed a little, there shouldn't be any repercussion.

"I think it's a quite tasteful plan."

"That's nice. I will go wherever there is alcohol."

[Umu, not bad.]

"Alright, then it's decided."

When all of us showed our agreement, Harold's teeth could be seen as he laughed.

"Well, that's that. Let's put the matter about Castle of Light as something to look forward to, first off, let's go to my secret base.

It's just a little farther, be patient and we will arrive in no time."

Even though he said 'a little farther', we arrived at Gilbert's hideout in just about five minutes from where we disembarked.

There was an old cabin on the open space where only the foundations of some buildings remained.

According to Gilbert, it seemed that it was formerly a work cabin for quarrying.

It was borrowed from his second older brother and had been refurbished for porcelain production.

The window of the cabin was shut down, and the door was replaced by a newer and heavier one.

As we approached, I could hear heavy footsteps from inside.

I had a feeling that there was someone, or rather, *something* inside.

(These are not human footsteps, that means...)

I thought that it was unnatural that Gilbert left his workshop even though he was making porcelain.

At first I thought that there were collaborators, but he didn't seem to have contacted anyone until he brought us here.

But if the collaborators were not human beings, and instead golems, for example, then it made sense.

“Now then, welcome to the secret workshop of Gilbert Turm, ladies and gentlemen.”

Gilbert opened the door of the workshop with a rumbling sound.

From inside the room, air colder than the outside air of autumn night came out.

Even if the golems were sucking the surrounding heat for their activity, it was a bit too cold.

In Gilbert’s workshop, as expected, many golems as large as children were running. Just like his drawing during the magic lecture, the golems were short and stout and headless.

Even only counting the ones within my line of sight, it seemed that there were more than 10 golems.

While this was an individual workshop, it was rare to have this many golems running.

Each golem, when I looked closely, was slightly different in appearance and movement. All of them probably incorporated special syntax to handle specialized work process. Some golems were pulverizing white ore containing light brown stripes into powder. There were other golems who added water to the white powder and kneaded it, while other golems were molding it by turning the pottery wheel.

They were working on various processes.

However, the characteristic of this workshop was not just the golems that were working in divisions.

There were a number of magic circles with complex composition spread throughout the room.

The work was being done not only with alchemy but also magic.

“The magic circles set up around here are for drying and cooling.

Special adjustment is given so that the porcelain doesn’t break even in a hurried work.

The furnace in the back room, of course, is a custom-made that incorporates magic.”

“Awesome, Aniki! Did you make a workshop like this alone?”

“Gilbert-san can use Hafan’s magic, huh.”

“Good grief, I’m glad that you are finally surprised.

It’s the result of me dabbling in magic for a little while.

Well, the one that actually built the magic was not me, but my partner.”

Gilbert was at the lead and went smoothly between the moving golems.

While being careful not to disturb the working golems, we followed Gilbert.

At the back of the workshop, four simple wooden tables were lined up.

About 20 white unglazed platters were placed on those tables, waiting for the next journey.

A golem was slowly making a round trip between the tables and the magic circle for drying.

Gilbert picked up the dish that was just placed by the golem and stared at it critically.

“I also came here once in the afternoon.

I started the magic from the scroll built by my partner and made the production faster.

Hm... it seems that we can proceed with the painting phase without problem.”

Gilbert said so and showed us the dish, it was a large dish of about 50 cm in diameter.

If one painted cobalt oxide on this dish, it would shine brighter.

“E, ehhh!? You mean you can already produce a prototype, Aniki!?”

“Aa, the magic of the furnace has to be refilled, so we’ll have to wait for my magic to recover, but it will be completed after firing it two more times.

Perhaps I will be able to show it off at about the day after tomorrow.

Anyways, I’m thinking about trying out the designs around here on the first few dishes.”

Gilbert handed the incomplete dish to Harold and took out a thick envelope from the shelf.

He picked out several sheets of paper and spread them out on the table.

With a delicate drawing, a pattern with atmosphere similar to the one that decorated Turm Wand Store was drawn.

Perhaps it was a copy of an ancient porcelain pattern.

Harold gazed alternately between the dish and the design, and gulped.

“Say, Aniki, I wonder if I can help, too?”

“Ou. Naturally, Botchan’s help is included in my calculation.

I meant to ask you myself if you didn’t ask me.

Botchan can paint a bit too, right?”

“Aa, I learn diligently after all. Because things like that are necessary for making wands.”

“Yosh, yosh, there is no problem then. It’s a big help.

It’s impossible for my golems to do delicate works like painting after all.

As expected it will be truly difficult to draw these many dishes all by myself.”

Gilbert smiled a little and put the design in front of Harold.

It looked like a luxurious pattern painted with not only blue but also variety of colors.

To me who was not so devoted to art, the designs did not seem to be of a level where I could be of help.

Harold stared at the design and nodded with confidence.

“I can do it... I, I will do it. This dish, I will make it the best possible dish.”

“Alright, that’s the spirit.”

Gilbert hit Harold’s back as if sealing the deal.

While watching the state of the two of them, Tirnanog laughed a little from inside of his face armor.

[Apparently, we don’t seem to be able to help with anything.]

“That’s true.”

“Oops, sorry, both of you. Even though I had brought you guys to a faraway place like

this.”

“No, I can see valuable things and it was a good learning experience.”

[Our roles will be looking at the finished product in surprise, it’s important for you guys after all.]

“Hahaha, your expectation is that high, we cannot make a bad one even if it’s just a prototype.

Well, it’s fine. Please look forward for it.

Botchan, I’m going to arrange a carriage from a nearby village, so start without me.”

Gilbert said so, leaving the workshop.

Harold put on an apron and changed into clothes he could work in.

Harold, after having decided on what to do, seemed to be quite excited.

“Harold, many things happened today, but I’m glad that there’s a chance to turn things around.”

“Aa, thank you for keeping me company this whole time, really, thank you.”

“Don’t mind it. Because we’re partners, aren’t we?”

Towards my words, Harold smiled with a crying looking face.

It looked like he was about to cry, but he looked much firmer than before.

If he looked like this, he would be fine.

By the time Harold finished preparing for work, the carriage that was called by Gilbert had arrived.

Then, Tirnanog and I entered the carriage and left the workshop.

Chapter 81

Secret Workshop (3)

When the night got much later, we arrived at Knot Reed.

As we ran through the city at night with a horse-drawn carriage, the song of the night watch had switched.

The night watch that were traveling around the city would sing a song that had been decided for every hour, so if one listened to it, one would know the approximate time.

The streets of the night were carved by their songs.

The water surface of the canal was shining with the orange light from the small street lights.

Warm light and jovial voices echoed from the taverns scattered here and there.

People who had finished their work were talking and drinking tonight as well.

[The fate of the downfall seems to not become a problem anymore.]

“That’s true, things ought to change for the better after this.”

The fraud case involving Earl Nibelheim led to the launching of an unexpected project.

In addition to avoiding Harold’s ruin flag, we were able to realize Gilbert’s dream, and the ending was near.

I took a breath and glanced at Tirnanog next to me.

Even though his emotions were supposed to be difficult to read while being hidden behind his face armor, he also seemed to be feeling pleased.

Oh, perhaps.

“Somehow you look like you’re in good mood tonight, Tir.”

[Kukuku, that’s true, I do not feel bad.]

I did not think that I would feel like this.

I guess I can understand the reason of your good-naturedness.]

Tirnanog said so and stroked my head without reservation.

To tell the truth, I had only been moving for my own goal, and in the end the ones that saved them were they themselves.

As for what I had done for anyone in this... huh? Had there been anything?

But, I didn't need to deny this gentle beast's words.

All was right with the world.

Thanks to that, the city lights of Knot Reed felt particularly warm and the night watch's song also felt like a gentle resonance to my ears tonight.



When we returned to Water Palace, I ordered the wagon to bring meals to my room.

It was for today's supper.

Tonight's menu was pork, pistachio pâté, and pickled vegetables such as onions and carrots.

I would surely be stamped as a big eater by the servant, but I didn't mind.

"Both of you, let's cheers for today's good work."

Confirming that the servant had left, I called Palug and Tirnanog.

Palug with her cat form and Tirnanog with his stuffed toy-size body, all appeared from the next room.

[I have told the cat about the approximate end of what happened around the Nibelheim family today.]

"Thank you, Tir."

I arrived at the table where the meal was lined up.

Then, Palug climbed on to my lap in appreciation.

Since I had opportunity, I enjoyed her soft fur.

[Does this mean that the ruin of the Earl will not take place?]

“Yes, I’m really glad that the white porcelain alchemist didn’t get killed in Ignitia.”

[All things considered, it’s all thanks to the blonde haired prince, huh.]

[Ufufu~, as expected of Auguste!]

“Y-yeah... right, that’s true...”

After informing that the chaos caused by Auguste on Island of Messenger opened up the destiny of Harold and Gilbert, Palug was in a good mood.

If Auguste himself knew of this matter, he would be troubled instead.

While talking with Palug who had such behaviour, Tirnanog was opening the dish cover.

He moved his short stuffed toy-sized arm deftly and divided the cuisine.

When I received the pâté and the dish with pickled vegetables served by Tirnanog, Palug moved to the next chair quickly.

[Even so, there were various things happening today.]

“Yes, we verified the contract and the transfer magic circle at the mine, listened to the discussion at the guild hall, attended the launching ceremony, made a blue glass... and finally went up the river and saw the porcelain workshop.”

[Uwah, you went to many places, huh~.]

Good grief.

I remembered today’s events and felt exhausted.

But it wasn’t a fruitless effort, and since things were changing for the better, it was all good.

However, Tirnanog shook his head to my words.

[No, Erica. There was one more thing, right?]

“One more?”

[Didn’t the student who had fallen magnificently this morning said something disturbing?]

[Eh~, what is it, what is it, what disturbing thing?]

Umm, what happened at that time?

A gray young man wearing crooked glasses flickered in my mind.

Elric Actorius-sensei, who smiled faintly while falling over.

The reason a student came all the way to the Trade City Knot Reed.

“Ah... the mysterious dangerous ruins!”

Tirnanog nodded.

I wondered why I forgot such an important thing.

Even if I had avoided the ruin flag, there was still the possibility that the death flag would attack by itself.

[Just hearing about it already feels suspicious. Something evil is definitely sealed, for example, something like this guy.]

[Umu, surely a savage fellow like this cat is wandering around.]

[How ominous...]

[How dangerous...]

The two phantom beasts showed disgust while pointing at each other.

Right.

Even so, hearing about this conversation reminded me of something else.

“But since it seems to be a military facility, I think there is a low possibility that there is such a phantom beast that is related to the destiny of my death.”

[What if weak beasts or spirits were being used as a mass murder weapon?]

[It can also be like the dragon knight who is still in the South, even if the phantom beast is not involved.]

“Indeed, if you say that... should I investigate about it after all?”

It took one to know one, so maybe only the same nonhuman could understand other nonhuman.

I should incorporate the opinions of these two elder people here.

“I understand... if both Tir and Palug have the same opinion, let’s investigate it.”

[Then, I shall change my schedule tonight from investigating the altar to this ruin investigation!]

“Yes, please, Palug.”

When she heard my decision, Palug got down from the chair gracefully.

Apparently she seemed to start the investigation soon.

She made a turn, and she turned into a figure with silver shoulder-length hair and tanned skin.

“Are you going as the Founder King Guillaume this time?”

“If I borrow some student’s clothes, I will look like an apprentice, right?

Although I also like the appearance of Jean.”

Saying so, Palug winked.

Indeed, rather than the muscular Severe King, it might be easier to mix with the students using the slender Founder King’s appearance.

“Be careful, Palug.”

[Please call out to me when there’s an emergency. I feel generous tonight, so I will come to your aid.]

“No way~, you’re being kind to me feels disgusting~.

Okay, that’s it. You should relax slowly with meals and a bath.

It’s improbable that there will be something like a fight right away tonight.”

After saying that, Palug jumped out of the window as usual.

She jumped over the canal that was glittering with the street lights, and disappeared into the streets of midnight.



Trade City Knot Reed, morning of the fourth day.

I regained consciousness with the feeling like someone was carrying me.

When I opened my eyes, my eyes met with Palug who was in her beautiful woman form.

“...Oh my, have you woke up?”

“Palug, welcome home...?”

Apparently, I seemed to have slept in the chaise lounge while reading a book last night. I thought to find out about the ruins in the collected materials.

Palug brought me to the lavish bed with a canopy.

After laying me on the sheets, she creeped up to Tirnanog who was asleep.

“You better get up.”

[Guohh!.]

Palug grabbed Tirnanog’s tail and lifted him up, swung him around and threw him away.

Tirnanog who was rolling like a ball, hit the foot of the bed, and fell down on the floor. It was a rough treatment as usual.

Tirnanog stood back up while still half asleep, climbed the bed and came to my side. Palug also sat on the corner of the bed.

“How was your investigation? Palug.”

Did you find the location of the ruins?

“The location is around the upstream of Varnalis River. It’s a historic ruin at the border of County of Nibelheim.”

“You were able to identify it properly overnight, huh...”

“It wasn’t difficult because it’s on the clear ley lines flow.

But I couldn't enter the ruins inside.

There are layers of strong barrier being put up, and it seems they will break if existences like me and the serpent go in from the front."

Palug said so but didn't seem to be sorry.

Although she was regaining her power, it was difficult for her to break barriers that were being put up by skilled mages.

[Then, how about your nose? Did you smell anything?]

"I could feel the power of a dense flame, but it wasn't the smell of a beast.

It wasn't very biological either, it had the feeling of pure magical power."

"So there was no phantom beast?"

"At least in the range that I could sense.

There is a possibility that it was a spirit, but the area is surrounded by the thick barriers.

And there were lots of students and construction workers wandering around, so I couldn't come closer."

Students and construction workers were loitering in the dead of the night?

Considering Actorius-sensei's information, it might be that some emergency response had begun.

"Did you see Actorius-sensei inside?"

"The glasses-wearing mage with gray hair, was it?

Well, I couldn't find him in the range where I could enter."

Palug tilted her head while remembering hard.

She had never seen Actorius-sensei, so there was a possibility that he might not have left any impression.

I'd like to meet Actorius-sensei directly and listen to the situation.

"I wonder if my investigation helps."

"Well, I think that it's enough for now."

[That's right. Cat, that's a good hint. Did you say spirit and flame?]

Tirnanog who was thinking while listening to Palug's story, nodded reassuringly. He got out of the bed, and came back with a book that I had in the chaise lounge. It was a collection of stories of the seven pilgrims which I purchased from the bookstore at Poisoner Street.

[After you slept, I was reading the rest of this book instead. There is a story in which both fire and spirit appeared.]

Tirnanog turned over the page and showed it to me and Palug. It was a picture of a huge red sword floating in the indigo sky.

[This is an illustration of the story '*A story of an alchemist who made the Cursed Sword of Fire and fought against the Prince of Sword.*']

That story had a synopsis like this.

Once upon a time, the royal brother of the West and the prince of the North were fighting for the rights of Knot Reed.

At one time, an eastern mage who hates the northern people appeared.

That mage instigated the royal brother and thought of breaking the power relationship between the two.

The royal brother of the West used the spirit brought from the East and forged the Cursed Sword of Fire to reject the prince of the North.

Several huge cursed swords covered the sky of Knot Reed.

'If you do not obey me, I will raise the Cursed Sword of Fire from Heaven and burn this area.

The calamity will destroy all of this land.

Only our alchemists of the West who know the means to prevent the calamity of the Cursed Sword.'

Said the royal brother as he threatened the prince.

However, the northern prince never lost his composure when he received the intimidation, even for a moment.

As soon as he stepped into the eyes of the alchemists, the prince surprisingly cut off his own neck.

As a result, the cursed swords which had lost their means to stop, poured down on the entire Knot Reed at once.

Like the words of the western royal brother, the calamity of the Cursed Sword burned all the land in Northwest.

The northern people were not afraid to die for their pride.

The proud and cruel warriors couldn't be tamed by intimidation.

If one scorned them, the wolves will reveal their true nature to eat and shred the flesh and marrows, the story concluded with the words of the pilgrim's lesson.

"Flame, spirit... what an ominous coincidence."

[If so, it also corresponds to the hypothesis of military facilities derived from spirits, what do you think?]

"You're really sharp, Tir. This Cursed Sword is definitely the identity of the weapons.

If the matter of the Nibelheim family settles down, Tir and I will join the night time investigation."

[Umu, I am fine with that.]

I rummaged through the inside of my bag and took out the tool that would be the breakthrough solution for this plan.

I had brought the wand in the assumption that the altar we were looking for was buried.

"Found it. The Wand of Digging.

If you don't mind being dirty, let's make Harold charges this wand in large quantity immediately by wand alteration."

"Oh my, that's quite extreme."

[If the charges cannot be done in time, it's fine to use me and the cat's nails.]

“Eh~! My nails are not a scoop though...”

While I was consulting about the method to invade the ruins, I heard the sound of the servant knocking.

It seemed that before I knew it, it was already time to change clothes.

Today I also changed places with Palug which had transformed into me, and went out of town with Tirnanog.

Since the matter of the historic ruins was to be late at night, I should head to Gilbert's workshop first.

Chapter 82

Secret Workshop (4)

Last night we went upstream using the flat-bottomed ship route, this time we traveled there using a horse-drawn carriage.

By the time we arrived at Gilbert's workshop, the sun was already high.

When we opened the door and entered the workshop, the golems seemed to be continuing the same works as last night still.

Meanwhile, Gilbert, the workshop's owner, were sleeping at his work desk.

Just as I was thinking of what to do, Harold showed his face from the back door at the right moment.

The redhead which was always beautifully arranged had also become a mess, he seemed a bit tired.

"Yo, Erica and mister. Please don't wake Aniki up.

Because he only went to bed one hour ago after an all-nighter."

[Umu, I see.]

Tirnanog gently fix the blanket which had fallen at Gilbert's foot.

"Is it perhaps still too soon for the baking to be done?"

"Nope, you have good timing.

The second firing is finished soon, and it's about time to steadily cool it down.

We have two prototypes, the finishing touches have just finished earlier... do you want to see them?"

"Amazing... really?"

"Hehe, are you surprised?"

Aniki, that guy, he seemed to want to see the finished product as soon as possible.

I happened to have a magic recovery potion, so he used his magic vigorously... well, *that* is the result.”

Harold referred to Gilbert who was sleeping with a look like a burned-out boxer at the end of a death match.

If it was not only mere sleep deprivation and fatigue but also magical power depletion, then it was understandable.

Harold lined up two flat wooden boxes on the desk and opened one of the lids.

What appeared was a delicate-looking dish with a lace made of blue and white silk threads.

On the slightly bluish white, there was a pattern of pomegranate drawn in glossy indigo blue.

“First off, it’s a dish painted only with blue.”

“Because of the deep blue, the white looks all the more brilliant... it’s very beautiful.”

[Hou, beautiful.]

“Right? This is a dish I am proud of. Aniki called this ‘sometsuke’ or ‘seika’, by the words of the eastern continent¹.”

Harold opened another box.

The first thing that caught my eyes was the vivid colors of the drawing.

At the center of the dish, lions and flowers that were drawn in red and gold were dancing.

In addition, the circumference part was divided into six, and animals like auspicious beasts were drawn in each.

The shade of indigo blue made the beasts stood out fantastically.

It resembled something I saw once.

The design of the dish which decorated the wall of Turm Wand Store, that had broken once and repaired with golden joinery.

“This other one is called something like ‘somenishiki kinrande’².

Paint a picture in blue and apply a glaze from the top and bake it, then put colors other than blue and gold and it's done.

As you can see, it took a lot of trouble making this."

"This seems to be the same pattern as the one with the crack traces that decorated the back of the store."

"Aa, that's right. Like the one that Aniki broke as a child.

It seems that this dish is based on one of Knot Reed's legend, the legend of a navigator who met seven kinds of monsters."

The large dish on which seven beasts were drawn was a beautiful but grotesque artwork.

Speaking of which, that legend should be compiled in the collection of stories that I only began to read.

"It's not like a dish but an artwork.

The appearance of the beast depicted on the broken plate is very beautiful."

"Nn? A dish? Now aren't you saying something unthinkable?"

The blanket was squirming while saying something, and Gilbert raised his face.

Oops, not good, the exhausted Gilbert had woken up.

Hm? But, I wondered if I said something strange.

"What do you mean by 'something unthinkable'?"

"Ojou-san, it's not 'like an artwork', this dish is actually an artwork... fuwaa~ah."

"I mean, Aniki, is it okay for you to wake up?"

"Aa, I already slept enough. It will be bad for my back if I sleep at a weird place any further.

Even so, Ojou-san has a bold way of thinking, huh... as expected from the Aurelia Ducal."

I inadvertently talked about porcelain with my previous life's aesthetic sense.

On this continent, porcelain was a rare existence.

Naturally, even the wealthy Aurelia Ducal couldn't afford porcelain dishes.

However, Gilbert seemed to be interested in my careless remarks.

“Do you know?

Porcelain was originally an artificial gem made by the King of the eastern continent.”

Gilbert gently stroked the surface of the result of his hard work while laughing.

Certainly, its beauty could be compared to jewels.

“It seems that in that place jewels like precious stones were thought to be the key that leads to immortality.

Since the successive kings used precious stones for everything, of course, naturally the produced precious stones were not enough.

Those who were commanded by the King did trials and errors repeatedly to artificially make precious stones.

It was this porcelain that was created in the end.”

Gilbert proudly said so.

I guessed he naturally felt connected to the people who did trials and errors.

“Initially it was created as an equipment used in the King’s rituals, then it became an artwork to be collected by the nobles, and finally it became a dish for ordinary people.

...Isn’t that great? How interesting. This really ain’t bad.”

When I heard Gilbert’s words, I realized.

It might be that this continental porcelain culture had reached a major turning point with my careless remarks.

Gilbert held his hand out to the air in order to lift the dish up.

I felt like I could see a vision of the future of porcelains in his hand.

“Haah!? I don’t know what you’re talking about suddenly, Aniki.

Are you still sleeping? Are you tired?

Hey, hey~ I still have potions to remove drowsiness and fatigue.”

Harold who seemed to get tired of the story pressed a potion bottle against Gilbert's face.

The content of the bottle was pretty much a grotesque purple color.

Gilbert retreated to pry his face off and escaped from the bottle.

"N-no way! I don't want to drink anything like that stupid unpleasant potion!"

"I got plenty of freebies from Sergei-ojisan, so please don't hold back and drink it, Aniki!"

"I'm not holding back or anything!"

Harold cornered Gilbert with a lively expression.

Looking at the desk, it seemed that there was a written explanation of the potion.

I was wondering what various things were mixed in, so I read it out loud.

"The main components are horse heart, deer horn, dried scorpion, dried sea serpent, molasses, and the cerebrospinal fluid of a kraken."

Although the magical supplement ingredient is the kraken's cerebrospinal fluid, I think it's an effective ingredient to recover from fatigue."

It could recover lots of magical power, and in addition, this potion was likely to become a nourishing tonic.

When Gilbert listened to the breakdown of the materials, his face turned pale.

"Geeeh, and I was chugging down lots of that strange potion last night!?"

[Is that so? It looks delicious.]

"Eh~, isn't it fine, Aniki. This is a high-class item that only costs three silver coins, you know~!"

When Harold drew near, Gilbert got up from the chair and ran away.

I felt his iron's will to not drink even a single sip.

"Oi, oi, oi, please don't bully the pitiful me with that kind of behavior, Botchan."

"Don't force him, Harold."

“I’m not bullying him, I’m showing my appreciation for his efforts!”

“Ah~, if you have time to bully me, then this will be Botchan’s last job!”

“Uh.”

Harold was the next to suffer a painful expression this time.

His movement solidified while holding a glass bottle containing purple potion.

“Hey, you have to negotiate with Earl Nibelheim, right?

It’s crucial that you convince the Earl, after all, you can’t move things, people, and money in a big way, right?”

“Uuh.”

Speaking of which, we hadn’t talked about the story of the matter and the countermeasure plan to the most important party.

But, didn’t Harold hate to speak directly with his father, the Earl Nibelheim?

“That’s true, but, I don’t think he will listen to my story if I go.

It’s much better for Aniki to be the one who speaks with him.”

“I want to complete the baking of the prototypes already.

Not a large dishes or a vases that are intended for collectors... let’s see, to begin with, let’s make a commonly-used dishes like small plates or teaware.

Besides, my appearance and character are dubious, right?

You are the trusted son of Earl Nibelheim after all, even if you only said that there are some reservations between you.

If Botchan persuades him, even Earl Nibelheim who has gotten cautious after having been scammed once will surely go along with it.”

When Gilbert said ‘trusted son’, Harold chewed his lips slightly.

I recalled the Nibelheim’s strained parent-child relation and the awkward air between them.

“Um, can I also go along with Harold? I’m worried about what will happen.”

“Erica, are you sure it’s okay?”

“But even if I am there, I may not be able to do anything.”

“No, rather than going alone, just by being there, you will make my mind feel dozens of times easier.”

Harold looked at me like a man who was grasping at straws, so I smiled back.

[Then, I suppose that I will also go with you.]

“No, he might be suspicious with mister because you look a bit too severe.”

Tirnanog who stood up sat back down again from Gilbert’s critics.

I couldn’t deny that he was indeed a bit suspicious-looking.

[Hmm... then, instead of coming along, I will advise you guys.

You will probably feel reluctant to reconnect with a family member who had a disagreement with you at one time.

However, no matter how unpleasant, make sure that you ascertain the true feelings of your opponent.

You’re in luck that you still have the time to do so.

Once you can never meet him again, you will never be able to know what that guy was really thinking.

For one knows not, for they will never respond again, it’s easy to arbitrarily decide that they were a good guy, but... that is somewhat lonely, too.]

Hearing Tirnanog’s words, not only me and Harold who held our breath but also Gilbert.

Perhaps because their situation overlapped with his he couldn’t leave them alone.

Because he suffered hundreds of years without knowing the true feelings of those who he grew up with as families.

“Mister...”

[That’s it from me. Later, please listen to your father.]

Cutting off Harold’s words, Tirnanog closed his mouth.

Harold gazed at Gilbert who was hesitating, and nodded firmly even though he was still wavering.

“Then, wait a moment. I will change my clothes.”

Harold said so, unraveling the string of the apron and retreated to the back of the workshop.

Gilbert was pondering about something, but after sighing, he stood up from the chair. He carefully put the dish with the pomegranate pattern into the box of white porcelains, and packed it in the bag.

Besides the dishes, he put as many as two samples of ore.

“A dish and a cobalt oxide sample and whetstone. Give it to Botchan.”

“What about Gilbert-san?”

“I... I’m... ultimately, I’m the type who isn’t good at using my head.

Since I will be shutting myself alone inside the workshop, I will consult the furnace and clay while moving my fingers.”

Gilbert scratched his head and glanced at Tirnanog.

I guessed something in Tirnanog’s words just now made him think a little.

I received the bag and nodded deeply.

“I will leave Botchan’s matter to you. Because I will have to do my best for myself for the time being.”

“It will be fine. Even like this, he is the one I chose as my partner.”

“I see, that’s right.”

Gilbert smiled with a complex expression and nodded a little.

He held a few materials and retreated to the back of the workshop.

In exchange, Harold who had changed into a noble-like appearance appeared.

“Well, let’s go. Erica. To my father.

It will be fine. We only need to talk about the porcelain in particular, so you don’t need

to worry about anything.”

Harold, who was putting on his brave face, urged me while talking rapidly.

I was still a little worried, but it was better than nothing at all.

For the porcelain industry and for the negotiations that would decide Harold’s fate, we headed to Nibelheim’s Castle of Light.

¹ 染付 (sometsume) : blue and white porcelain, 青花 (seika) : ceramics with blue pattern on a white background. These words were written in katakana, so maybe the ‘eastern continent’ in this world has a Japanese culture.

² 染錦金襴手 : gold-painted porcelain that combined both dyeing and overglaze enamels.

Chapter 83

Secret Workshop (5)

When Harold and I arrived at the courtyard of Castle of Light, Earl Nibelheim was about to get on a carriage while holding a document bag.

He was planning to go to Knot Reed again to negotiate with the creditors.

We were barely in time, it was good that we didn't miss each other.

Harold quickly descended from the carriage and rushed over to Earl Nibelheim.

"Tou-san!"

"Harry!?... And Erica-sama?"

Earl Nibelheim looked at Harold with an unexpectedly gentle expression on his face. Because of his repeated anxiety, his presence was thin.

"U-um, Tou-san, you know what!"

"Harry, what happened, there are bags under your eyes... You seem to be exhausted."

"There was something I had to do no matter what so I stayed up all night... no, that, that's not what I mean... umm, that... sorry, that was—"

Harold who originally was full of spirit seemed to droop as he went round in circles.

The situation had turned around for the better so far, and we only needed to tell him and get his approval.

I thought for a moment that maybe I should be the one to talk instead, but realized that it would not be good, so I chewed my lips.

I decided to take a step back and wait.

"There is something I want to talk about. Um, it's about the matter of fundraising."

When Harold finally started to talk calmly, Earl Nibelheim approached him slowly. And then, he stretched his large and rugged hand and stroked his son's short red hair.

"Harry, it's a great help that you work and think over various things. However, I cannot burden a young child like you any more than this—"

"Yeah, I know this is not an issue that's okay for a child to intrude in on. But!"

Harold strongly blocked the words of Earl Nibelheim.

Upon that Earl Nibelheim's expression turned into a very serious one.

And Harold, who was sensitive to the change in his father's facial expression, froze.

"S-sorry...!"

"...No, I'm sorry. The one who should apologize in this case is Tou-san."

Earl Nibelheim crouched down to Harold's height and their eyes met properly.

The Earl conveyed his feelings to Harold as if repenting to God.

"Harry, I think I will tell you the things I couldn't convey to you if not for circumstance like this."

"What's the matter, Tou-san?"

"Harry, I feel remorseful every time I see your scar.

I have ruined your body forever due to my own carelessness.

I was scared to face you. I thought that you must resent me."

Earl Nibelheim cut off his words, he quietly took a deep breath.

"At that time, I couldn't stay by your side when you were badly hurt.

I didn't grant your wish when you said you want me to stay by your side because you were lonely.

Even when I could also watch over the progress of your treatment, I had left it to Turm

elder.”

“Such a thing, it couldn’t be helped, because Tou-san was busy with the project at that time!”

“That was only an excuse. An excuse that couldn’t even fool myself.

Still, I should have stayed with you.

I should have made time for you even a little, and I should have gone to see you.”

“Tou-san...”

“This is also the case with the fraud.

Whether you were a child or not, I should have talked about it properly.

Because you will inherit the territory which is your hometown.”

That being said, Earl Nibelheim took Harold’s right hand.

He regretted that he hurt his son’s body and was about to lose the territory his son would inherit due to his own negligence.

“Harry, I’m sorry.”

“Wait... what are you apologizing for, Tou-san?”

Harold had a perplexed face after his father’s repentance.

Harold held his father’s hand tightly with his right hand.

“Even if we don’t meet much, there is no reason for me to resent my hometown and Tou-san who works hard for the territory, right?”

Harold said with tone of voice as if he were an even younger child.

Towards that, Earl Nibelheim’s eyes got slightly blurred.

“Even the fact that I got such an injury, it’s because my powers were suited towards making wands instead.

My hands are miraculous hands, someone told me.
That, I'm sure was chosen by destiny.
Don't worry, Tou-san. It wasn't due to Tou-san's fault.
Everything, surely, was destiny."

As Harold kept on talking quickly more and more, his smile grew proportionally.

"So, I have no regret or resentment about my life."

Harold said that no matter what happens he would accept it and live.
There were somewhat intense thoughts, but that was his strength.

"Hey, Tou-san. And now, it's the fate-given, unmistakable chance. That's why, please, hear me out."

In response to Harold's words, Earl Nibelheim became silent for a while.
His expression looked like a criminal who was released from many years of constraints.
Those eyes were filled with tears, but those tears never fell.

And Earl Nibelheim nodded quietly.

"Harry... aa, let's hear it. This matter that made you reluctant to sleep and did your best. I'm going to hear you out properly."

I felt like the stilted air between them changed.
At last, their mutual feelings were conveyed and the ill feelings had disappeared.

Harold opened the wooden boxes gracefully and took out the dish with pomegranate pattern.
The contrast of beautiful blue and white shone vividly under the autumn sunlight.
Earl Nibelheim stared at the dish and sucked his breath.

“This porcelain... it seems quite different from what was circulated by the antique fraud some time ago.

That one had a warmer colour like of earth, but this has exactly the same radiance as the authentic masterpiece, no, this one has more texture.

Above all, this blue, isn't it not supposed to be on this continent?”

“If I tell you it will take a long time, but...”

Harold explained the series of miraculous events that had happened so far to Earl Nibelheim.

The identity of the alchemist who succeeded in restoring the white porcelain was Gilbert Turm and his meeting with him who came back to Knot Reed by chance.

The fact that the tailing from the low-quality silver ore was actually a rare metal that could be processed into an expensive pigment.

The raw material of the porcelain was a common whetstone in the northwestern part. And that they already reached the production of prototypes of porcelain in Gilbert's furnace.

After hearing all these things, Earl Nibelheim seemed perplexed.

“No way, that such things would happen... it is difficult to believe it so suddenly.”

“As all has come together like this so far, there's no way not to make use of it, Tou-san. Let's think about turning it into the main industry.”

“Is it true that the young man is Gilbert of the Turm family?”

“If you have any doubts, please visit the notary Bernhard. When we consulted about this case, we asked Gilbert's older brother to attend.”

“Bernhard, huh... if he can prove his identity, he is definitely the real thing.”

In the northwest part of the country, the name of Turm family had an absolute reputation.

It was the same whether it was Gilbert who was rumored to be the prodigal son whose life-or-death was uncertain.

Furthermore, if it could be guaranteed that Bernhard, a notary public, was his brother, then there was no further proof needed.

“If so, the problem is about the purchase of whetstones.”

“Since it’s not silver mining rights, can’t we just buy the whetstone mining rights?”

“That’s it, I cannot afford to purchase it outright with our current financial standing. Since my reputation is falling lately, it will be difficult to borrow money more than this. If we can explain the matter about porcelain... no, it wouldn’t be weird if we got taken advantage of...”

“No way, even though we can obtain cobalt oxide for free...”

“That’s right, it’s such an astronomical miracle that rare materials like that were thrown away... hm? Wait?”

Earl Nibelheim who was talking until that point had a frantic expression on his face.

“Harry, the production place of the whetstones, the raw materials of this porcelain, is it in Evit region?”

“Eh... uum, since it’s in the upstream of Varnalis River, yeah, it’s should be in Evit region.”

“It’s a miracle. No, this must be destiny... we did it, Harry!”

The expression on Earl Nibelheim turned bright.

He lifted Harold easily while raising his voice in joy.

“W-w-what happened, Tou-san?”

“Hahaha! What a fool I was! Everything was gathered from the very beginning!”

“Wait a moment, Tou-san! I don’t understand! Don’t leave me out of loop again!”

“Aah, sorry, Harry.”

Earl Nibelheim lowered Harold to explain after exhaling to calm himself down.

“About four years ago, I went to a certain merchant in Knot Reed to ask for an investment in our silverware industry.

It was a long-established store that handled a large amount of whetstones of the Evit region.

At that time, he was in trouble with the disposal of the stone dust which came out when processing the whetstone.”

“Eh...?”

“Even if the amount of investment was small, I thought it was fine to accept the stone dust here.

We have a lot of old waste mines that have withered, so whatever it is, I don’t mind cramming them in the old waste mine until they’re bursting full.

When I suggested it, he gave me a favorable offer for the fund.

It was a contract that said all the stone dust of the Evit region that the vendor produced for 20 years will be accepted by Nibelheim.

What we want is the whetstone, which is not a stone but a material... then, the stone dust is enough.”

“Eeeh~~~~!!!”

Harold and I were the ones who were surprised this time.

The bell that informed us of the time had just resounded.

Earl Nibelheim raised his head at ease.

“It’s time. Sorry, Harry. I will borrow a sample of this porcelain and this ore.”

“Of course, Tou-san!”

Harold carefully put the dish back into the wooden box and handed it to Earl Nibelheim.

Earl Nibelheim put his leg on the waiting carriage and looked back unexpectedly.

“Sorry, and thank you, Harry. You are my pride. You are too good to be my son.”

After leaving behind something like that, Earl Nibelheim went out of the castle in no time.

Harold stood in the middle of the courtyard after his father left and didn’t move.

To me who was behind him, it seemed that he was staring at the sky.

“Seriously, that person always busy running around.”

“You mean your father?”

“Aa. I wish I could talk a lot more with him.

Saying I am his pride, now of all times... such a thing, if he said such a thing... what should I say, I don’t understand...”

Harold sniffled while cursing with a loud voice.

I see, he wasn’t looking at the sky, he was enduring so the tears wouldn’t spill.

I tried to take out my handkerchief but stopped myself.

Because I recalled the rule that Harold imposed on himself about crying only once.

I thought that happy tears shouldn’t count, but it was he himself who decided it.

“It’s alright. You can talk a lot with him from now on.”

“I see... that’s true...”

It seemed that Harold couldn’t endure it anymore, he crouched and heaved with sobs.

Laying a handkerchief down, I sat in a back-to-back position with him.

“Erica?”

“I got tired from the conversation, so I want to take a break. Is that fine?”

“Well, but...”

“Harold must be tired too. You ought to take it easy.”

“Yeah... sorry, thank you...”

My back took Harold’s slight weight.

He had noticed my implied intentions and began to cry without hesitation.

I pretended that I couldn’t hear him crying, so that Harold could cry as much as he likes.

I entrusted half of my weight on Harold’s back and looked up to the autumn sky from the courtyard.

I felt that the Nibelheim's sky on that day was high, clear, and blue.

Chapter 84

Hometown of Prodigal Sons (1)

Harold and I returned from Castle of Light to Gilbert's workshop, and told Tirnanog and Gilbert, who were left behind, about our conversation with Earl Nibelheim.

Harold was embarrassed, so I omitted how the parent-child reconciliation went down. Well, if I talked about how he cried for over thirty minutes, then I would also have to tell them about how he washed his face and did other things.

[Umu, even so, using the stone dust, huh. To think there is such a trick.]

"No, no, no, such too-good-to-be-true stories will not come easily like this, right?"

"My dad is not a man who will do something like a scam. That guy is very awkward to the extent that it's irritating."

Tirnanog seemed impressed, but Gilbert didn't seem to believe it right now.

Looking at him like that, Harold spoke to him.

"With this we have all the ingredients, and it seems that the fundraising and the other things are going to go well... but, after all, what is Aniki going to do?"

"Hm? What about me?"

"Because you were brooding about it. When will you go to Master?"

Gilbert sighed deeply.

"I have been making excuses for so many years that I couldn't face my old man until this was done, but here I just finished making it.

The prototypes of the small dishes are going to be completed soon too, so what should I make my next excuse."

Gilbert stroked the dish on which the legendary monsters were drawn with his fingertips.

“I thought my connection with my old man has broken forever.
Broken things cannot be restored.
Just like my old man’s important decorative dish which I broke.
So at the very least, I wanted to make it again with my own hands.”

As if it was somebody else’s problem, Gilbert divulged things he had been keeping inside his heart personally.

Although certainly broken things couldn’t be restored to their initial state, Turm elder decorated the wall with that dish which was patched with gold preciously.

Hm? Oh? Somehow Gilbert’s perception seemed to be slightly off.
Perhaps Gilbert didn’t know that the dish he broke had been restored?

“By the way, Gilbert-san, the dish that you broke has been restored neatly.”
“Hah...? How did he do something like that with a porcelain that was broken so finely?
For porcelain restoration, it cannot be done just by gluing.
The drawing is too fine to be using glue, then is it *that*?
No, whichever it was, you will need lacquer. There is no lacquer on this continent, so what can substitute for it...?”

Gilbert had bit the bait.
As someone who had dedicated his life for porcelain, it was a conversation that made him concerned about the details.
However, I smiled meaningfully, keeping my silence.
Seeing my action, it seemed that Harold and Tirnanog also arrived at the same idea.

“Speaking of which, he said that it was restored with gold, right~.”
“Hah... what do you mean, Botchan!?”
“Honestly~, Master went through great trouble to find a way to remake contact between the pieces~.
When he started talking about it, it would always turn into a really long story, so even I haven’t heard the end of it~~”

[Yes, I also feel like I heard it from the shop owner, but I wonder what he said about the technique.]

“Hehehe, you’re curious, right, Aniki?”

“What is this! You’re ganging up on me!”

The more we talked about the restoration, the more Gilbert’s face turned into a troubled expression.

I saw that it was the time, so I gave him the last push.

It was the few words that became the deciding factor to push Gilbert’s back who really wanted a reason to go home.

“It’s mended very beautifully, you should try going to the back of Turm Wand Store.

Rather than listening to us amateurs, the expert Gilbert-san certainly would like to see it with your own eyes, right?”

When I pointed it out, Gilbert widened his eyes.

From the throat of Gilbert who was furrowing his eyebrows, sounds that were similar to a chuckle gradually came out.

The chuckles gradually grew louder, and finally he let out a loud laughter while looking up to the sky.

“Hahaha... you got me! I give up!

I have to go and see the workmanship of the restoration.

I was looking for reasons not to return home, but now I found a reason to return!”

“I mean, Aniki, you couldn’t get close to the back of the store even though it’s nearby, just how cowardly are you!”

“Who cares! I have that kind of personality, okay! Aah, you’re all so noisy, I get it, I get it!”

Like that, Gilbert began to prepare for his homecoming while complaining.

He wore an overcoat, a hat, and put away the important dish carefully into his bag.

Everyone might have noticed that as he lowered the hat over his eyes, his mouth slackened in his happiness, but no one mentioned it.

“I give up. I’m still nervous about seeing him, but somehow I’m getting excited.
No way, I didn’t realize that I actually really want to see my old man.
Ah—... say, I mean... everyone, thank you very much.”

With a shy appearance that was unlike him, Gilbert muttered so.
Perhaps he was too embarrassed to hear our replies, so he took his bag and started walking quickly.
We saw him off silently, but we were staring at him with warm gazes.

Gilbert’s footsteps towards Town of All Kinds of Goods were light, and his back looked somewhat proud.



Harold suggested taking a late lunch after seeing off Gilbert’s homecoming.
I was thankful for his suggestion as I had missed lunch today as well.
The menu was a specially made yellowish-brown colored onion tart that Harold bought from Gizella-obasan.

“I was also curious about this, I thought that I should buy it next time.”
“Hehe, glad to hear that!”

Harold cut the tart neatly.
Oh, speaking of which, there was something I wanted to ask him to do.
In order to use them in the investigation of the aforementioned ruin, I had to charge the wands for underground exploration such as Digging in large amount.
Since the porcelain-related works had also settled down, right now might be the best if I wanted to borrow his help.

“Say, Harold.”
“What is it, what is it? You don’t have to worry, I’ll give you the most delicious one, you know?”

“No, it’s not about tart. It’s fine if it’s after we finished eating, but I’d like to ask for mass filling for wands.”

“Ooh~, that’s fine. What kind of wand?”

I tried counting as to what was the minimum necessary wands.

At times like this, the experience of exploring in the Ruins of Visitor was useful.

At that time, I could entrust some magic to Klaus, but now I had to do it all alone.

“I need you to charge Digging, Glam Sight, Magic Mapping, and then Levitation and Feather Falling.”

“...There’s probably not enough material to charge a large volume right now, but if we get back to my place I may be able to manage something.

Even so, that’s an amazing amount of wands. Are you going to search for gold or diamond veins this time?”

“No, that’s not it... ah, that’s right. Incidentally, I need a recommendation for a cooling system offensive wand.”

Hearing the word ‘offensive’, Harold’s face turned stiff for a moment.

“Seriously, what are you planning to do behind the scenes, Erica?”

“That is... going to be a long explanation, so let’s talk while eating.”

“Heeh~? Well, I’m also hungry, so thank you.”

Harold shrugged his shoulders and distributed the sliced tarts to me and Tirnanog.

At that time, the window was hit by the wind and rattled violently.

“I wonder if the window fitting is bad because it’s old.

I give up. If he’s seriously using this cabin as a workshop, he should have repaired it first—uwah!?”

Harold who was peeking outside the window became speechless.

From the gap of the slatted shutter which he lifted, I saw the appearance of a dragon descending down from the sky to the ground.

By the way, I felt like I saw a dragon like this during the launching ceremony.

“What is that!?”

[It’s a dragon. Looking at its size, it’s the 10-meter class.]

“It looks like a gray dragon. Its scales are beautiful.”

“Why are you so calm! That’s not it, why is a dragon coming down here when this isn’t even close to any air patrol routes!?”

“I wonder. If it isn’t patrolling, then maybe it’s sightseeing?”

[Umu. I guess it is sightseeing.]

“No, it’s not!”

While bantering with the panicking Harold, a lightly dressed young boy was getting down from the back of the gray dragon gracefully.

“Ah—, it’s Auguste-sama after all...”

“Heh!? By Auguste, you mean *the* Crown Prince of Ignitia? Why does such an important person come to the country side like this?”

“Well, maybe he’s looking for something.”

[Don’t you mean someone?]

Tirnanog stared at me meaningfully.

He is looking for you.

For certain, I felt that was the meaning of that stare.

Auguste stroked the forehead of the gray dragon and whispered something.

The dragon flew in response to Auguste’s instructions, after turning over in the sky several times, it flew away somewhere.

He gazed at the footprints on the ground and then approached the workshop without hesitation.

My whereabouts was completely exposed.

I opened the door of the workshop and decided to invite Auguste in.

“Greetings, Auguste-sama. What reason is there for the prince of the whole country to be in a remote place like this...?”

“Oh yeah, that’s of course to meet a certain duke’s daughter who has hid herself in this remote place.”

Auguste showed a carefree smile.

He looked around the interior of the workshop curiously over my shoulder.

For now, it seemed that the working golems were taking a break at the back of the workshop, but I wondered how much it would be fine to expose.

When I thought about that, Auguste’s gaze suddenly stopped at one point.

Looking back, there was Harold, who was tense and rigid.

Auguste had a delighted expression on his face, similar to a cat who had found a bird, making him look like a bad person.

“U-um, I’m...”

“Wait a moment. Let me guess. When I arrived at this city, I have seen someone with similar face.

I’m sure that he was called Harold II, the Earl of Nibelheim.”

“Eh, how do you know my dad’s name...”

“Learning the face and name of a person turned out to be my job. I’m Auguste Ignitia.”

Harold grasped the hand that Auguste presented out in a terribly scared state.

“Uum... I’m Harold.”

“You have the same name as your father. Nice to meet you, Harold III.”

“Y-yes.”

Harold nodded as he shrunk on himself, worried stiff.

It was understandable. No doubt that he was thinking why a prince like him suddenly came to a place like this.

“Well, you don’t have to be that tense.”

“Although he looks like a perfect prince, the inside is like a curious and mischievous kitten, so even if you’re a little rude, he will smile and forgive you, Harold.”

“Hahaha, Erica. Rather, the only one who manages to say rude things to that degree to me is you.”

Auguste imitated me and nudged me with his elbow in a playful gesture.

After laughing for a while, he stared at my face suddenly and gave me a gentle smile.

“It seems that your troubles have been sorted, huh.”

“Oh my, does it show on my face?”

“Rather than your face, it’s your attitude. Because your facial expression is rather difficult to read.

I did think you felt a bit serious in your absentmindedness during the launching ceremony.

Because this is you we’re talking about, you stuck your nose in a troublesome matter again, didn’t you?”

“I’ve been seen through. As expected from Auguste-sama.”

“It’s only you whom I have to keep an eye on properly, because it could be dangerous otherwise.”

It seemed that Auguste treated me as a problem child.

It was a help that he cared, or rather, there were aspects that I was grateful for.

“Aa~h, I’m too late, huh. I thought I could kill time or something.”

“So you’re thinking of using other people’s trouble to kill time, huh.”

“Because even if I say ‘trouble’, it seems to be more of a conspiracy.

With this massive workshop, you pulled the Nibelheim’s successor to join in your conspiracy.”

Auguste said that with a look like a mischievous child, and looked around curiously.

Harold seemed to become even more wary of Auguste’s attitude, which changed to have eyes like a cat¹.

To begin with, it was troubling that such a reaction was not unwarranted.

I also felt nervous about the fact that Auguste seemed to want to explore the workshop even now.

What should I do. Even though there were so many things that we couldn't show off to outsiders yet.

No, wait.

I wondered if Auguste should be integrated into the plan as well.

Thinking that way, his position and popularity were very useful.

"Auguste-sama, since I also have something to discuss with you, how about we continue our conversation while eating and drinking?"

You're just in time, we were about to slice the tart."

"That's a good suggestion. I'm in."

"Then, please go over there. I hope the taste suits your mouth."

I pointed to a room where we were preparing lunch a while ago and urged Auguste. At the same time, Harold was hiding behind Tirnanog and was looking at the situation.

"Harold, I wonder if you can brew us tea. You know the location of the *tea set*, right?"

"Eh? Yeah, alright."

"Because it's something to serve the prince with, please choose the *best* one."

"Yeah? Ah... aah, I see! I understand, leave it to me!"

We will offer a rare beauty that Auguste-sama has never seen before."

Harold realized the true meaning that I wanted to say and nodded vigorously. He seemed to have changed from his state a while ago and was full of spirits. Auguste tilted his head and seemed puzzled.

"Are you planning something after all?"

"Now, I'm not sure I know what you mean."

"Is it a new kind of tea leaves? No, this doesn't look like a workshop that processes tea leaves."

Then, something in the tea set..."

"Please look forward in seeing it."

I made a business smile on my face, standing in front of Auguste to guide him as he continued his deduction about the truth of our conspiracy.

Now then, we were able to draw his interest.

If he looked at the real porcelain, he would definitely sink his teeth into it.

And now to make him an accomplice, huh. This was my time to shine.

¹ Have eyes like a cat: in Japan, making eyes like a cat is often associated with careless and oftentimes destructive curiosity. This means, when Auguste makes eyes like a cat after their talk, Harold and Erica are worried that Auguste is going to forcefully rummage through the workshop without their consent, because that's how a cat would act.

Chapter 85

Hometown of Prodigal Sons (2)

We went to a room that was left as it was when we prepared the lunch earlier.

Tirnanog and I, and also Auguste our guest of honor, made a bee line to the big table.

Auguste looked on with great interest at Gilbert's belongings that were piling up on the chair that was pushed to the corner.

"Magic scrolls and Flora Magica illustration book, huh. This place is like a mage's workshop."

"Yes, that's roughly correct."

Gilbert was an alchemist who had also took a class about magic, so it was not that far from the truth.

Scrolls and illustration books were the belongings of Gilbert's partner who was a mage.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

While I was talking with Auguste about such a thing, Harold who was wearing an apron came into the room.

On the hand-made silver tray, there were porcelain tea cups with a blue pattern on them that had just been created by Gilbert as prototypes.

The painting was simple due to making it in a hurry, but the fine brushwork was something to be expected from a craftsman.

The teapot was a porcelain made of white ceramic glaze which generally appears on the market.

He probably wanted to mold the prototype in a short time, so he avoided making a teapot with complicated shape.

This made the exquisiteness of the material used for the cups stood out.

Harold arranged the cups in front of each person and poured in the tea.

The dark orange color drawn by the tea he chose further complemented the whiteness of the porcelain.

“Here you go, Your Highness Auguste.”

“Heeh, I thought it was a jade bowl cut out from a mutton fat jade from the distance, but it’s not. This is an artifact.

Of course it’s not pottery either. It’s too thin and it’s obvious if I compare the color tone.

I remember. I have seen something similar to this in the treasury.”

Auguste raised the corner of his lips a little and smiled happily.

“Erica, the one who was hiding the white porcelain alchemist I heard from rumors, was it you?”

“No way. We were just collaborating when I met him by chance.”

“That was also... a mysterious coincidence, huh.”

As expected, I couldn’t say that our connection was made by chance while I was crushing my death flag.

I laughed ambiguously to gloss over it.

Auguste lifted the cup and brought it to his mouth quietly with graceful movements.

This prince’s style looked like a beautiful girl as usual, he became a painting just by drinking tea.

A certain cat would have wanted the still of such a scene.

While he was putting down the cup in his hand, he murmured calmly.

“Speaking of porcelain, I thought that it was only ridiculous items that seemed to be held in the treasury.

For example, a large vase about a person’s height, or a big plate where a crouching

child can hide their entire body.

However, this one is like a jewel that fits in my hand.”

“I’m pleased that you like it.”

“Aa, the tea is also wonderful.”

Since it would be wasteful if it gets too cool, I also sipped my tea.

This black tea was a summer-pick Darjeeling that smells like muscat grape.

Refreshing and had a strong flavor.

The smell and taste that the royal aristocracy of Ignitia seemed to like.

“And this picture is also very beautiful. It’s a white ceramic with blue pomegranate pattern.”

“You have discerning eyes. This is a classic pattern that was prevalent in the eastern continent, Zygos¹, a long time ago, Your Highness.”

Harold added complementary information to Auguste’s careless remarks.

Thanks to painting with Gilbert, Harold was also getting deeper into the eastern culture.

“And then? How much should I buy this for?”

Auguste said straight away, while sending a provoking stare.

Although I thought that royalty and titled nobility with eyes for the beautiful would really get into porcelain, this starting topic was too to-the-point.

I reflexively wanted to shrink back, but I regained my composure and replied.

“This is still an experimental prototype, so we cannot sell it.

In any case, as this will be the main industry of the Nibelheim territory, you should be able to purchase vessels tailored to a variety of uses.”

“I see, that’s a shame. I can’t wait for the commercialization.”

“And besides, we plan to offer Auguste-sama a better vessel than this one.”

When I said so with a light smile, Auguste gazed into my eyes with a surprised

expression.

“An offer? I feel somewhat included, but what are you plotting?”

“No, no, we just want to offer such things like large vase, ornamental plate, and *tableware*. It’s enough for us if you can *use* it normally.”

“Hm, it’s an especially rare beautiful vessel. It’s wasteful for the royal family to be the only one who enjoys this.

If this is used for tableware anyway, I would like to use it in a special place. I see... to make me think so, that’s your intention, huh.”

Auguste narrowed his eyes and looked at me confidently.

As expected he was a person with a good judgement.

“Erica, you are going to let the royal family know about the existence of porcelain in the continent.”

“Yes. I’m saved since this conversation will be quick.”

Auguste seemed to enjoy the secret plan.

It seemed that my strategy to fuel his curiosity and made him interested was successful.

“I would like to popularize porcelain as a product used by every level, not just as collections of the royal aristocracy.”

“Every level approach, huh... to what extent?”

“Literally every person can use it without distinguishing between rich and poor.”

“If we approach from that angle, the culture itself will change.

That is very interesting, how can we spread it to the people?”

“Trends come down from the top. If the royal family uses porcelain tableware, the noblemen who saw it would also wish for it.

Then, you would want a distinguished family in each field to enter and exit the noblemen’s houses.”

“Hmm, if every distinguished family uses it, it will also spread to the people, huh.”

The future where everyone would use porcelain, which Gilbert had envisioned in his mind.

What I was about to do was a little boost for that future.

“Sounds good. I may as well ride on your plan.”

“Thank you very much, Auguste-sama.”

“However, if I am to use it at a ceremony or a banquet, I would like a basis that can convince my father.”

“Should I explain its advantages and origin? Or is it for tea ceremony procedures?”

“If anything, I would like it to be appropriate for tea ceremony.”

Perhaps if we show the actual thing, it would be easy for my father to attract individual interests.

However, in order to move His Majesty the King, I need another push.

To be more precise, I want a basis for my father to convince his retainers.”

Indeed, there was a reason for that demand.

Silverware was the main material used for the current banquet.

Although it had already become a mere formality by the advancement of magic, there were meanings in using silver such as to prevent poisoning².

If it turned into tableware made of porcelain suddenly, they would want a reason.

One should hide one’s original aim and induced people’s consciousness with a topic that was easy to sympathize with.

If we needed such scenario, there was nothing but *that* subject matter.

“Without Auguste-sama, the porcelain could never be made again... how about it?”

“Ooh~, that’s interesting, but you cannot lie, lies are—”

“No, no, I wouldn’t dare. That’s the truth, you know?”

I briefly told Auguste the story of Gilbert’s escape.

Auguste was listening with an unreadable, mysterious expression.

“Hm, so the man named Gilbert of the Turm family was in the Island of Messenger at that time, huh.

What a strange coincidence.”

Auguste closed his eyes as he sipped his black tea from the thin porcelain cup.

His long eyelashes cast shadows on his white cheeks.

“Speaking of Turm family, is that the wealthy merchant family of Knot Reed, who was descended from a distinguished family of mages, that deals with shipbuilding and marine transportation?”

“And also maritime insurance and weapons production.”

“One of the most prominent northwestern family who owns Water Palace and is producing influential people in various fields.

The Turm family will declare Ignitia’s position as benefactor by offering porcelain as a form of repayment to the debt of gratitude received by their youngest son.

I see, it’s a good card. A lot of lords will be convinced.”

Auguste smiled like a bad person.

I slowly shook my head.

“Seen from the backside, it may be so.”

“Hou, in that case, how is it seen from the frontside?”

“Their important son had saved someone’s life unknowingly.

If they listen to this story, the King and the Queen will be pleased as well.”

I remembered Palug’s joy and said so.

Auguste averted his eyes from me, and sipped his black tea to gloss over it.

There was an embarrassed air somehow, and I felt that his cheeks were red.

“No way, that kind of approach is...”

“If you listen to the story as it is, that’s the kind of interpretation you should get, you know?”

“That’s true, but I was talking about the political influence... aah, jeez, you win.”

Auguste switched to a friendly smile.

Somehow I could feel that he was happy from the bottom of his heart.

The chaos that he caused had unexpectedly helped someone, for him, it had to be a pleasant thing.

“Well then, on the occasion of my victory, may I be impudent for a bit longer and request something else?”

“Oops, there’s no chance to be careless, huh. Well, you can ask me as much as you want.”

“Could you allow us to stamp the crest of the Ignitia royal family in all the works made in the furnace of Turm and Nibelheim as a proof of loyalty to the Ignitia royal family?”

It was something that I often saw in the previous world.

With this, we could receive the unprecedented honor of royal family’s seal in the workshop.

It was the so-called royal warrant.

“I see, you can add special value to the porcelain.

As the royal family, we can demonstrate our power by hinting at our involvement in the porcelain production by gathering the tasteful technology.

Besides, since we are going to use whatever porcelain offered to us, the one with the highest rating is better.”

“You’re very quick on the uptake, this saved me some trouble.”

“Alright. I will talk to my father.

Well, since there is no reason for my father to refuse, as long as we can talk, I will be able to get the approval quickly.”

“Thank you once again, Auguste-sama.”

I bowed to Auguste.

Harold, who had been listening to our conversation quietly, sighed in relief.

“Uhaah... that was somewhat amazing, it surprised me.

I thought we were only going to sell it, then suddenly we got the honor to offer it to the royal family.

Something like rewriting our culture, and including the awe-inspiring crest of the royal family in the porcelain among other things.”

“I’m glad, Harold. The Nibelheim family will also be saved with this, right?”

“It feels unreal... everything went without a hitch in such an anticlimax way...”

Harold sighed deeply again, wiping his forehead with his sleeve.

It seemed that he was getting too nervous, he was sweating badly.

But, well, I was able to pull out overwhelmingly favorable conditions in our transaction, so it was good.

On the other hand, Auguste was enjoying his tea with a relaxed appearance.

“Well~, I was wondering what sort of conspiracy I would be involved in, but it was kind of normal.”

“There are other good stories for Auguste-sama. This is the blue used for painting this porcelain, but in reality—”

Then we talked about using cobalt oxide for restoring the stained glass of the church, tasted the tart we forgot to eat, then Harold who regained his state began his tourist guide recommendation for Town of All Kinds of Goods for Ignitian people, Auguste saw the workshop’s golems, all in all we had a nice chat.

I was looking at everyone’s faces, and felt relieved that the destruction of the Nibelheim family could be avoided if the situation went as it was.



The time was early evening, and orange light was coming from outside the window.

Our long and fun tea ceremony was about to end soon.

I asked Auguste.

“I think that I will return to Water Palace soon, what about Auguste-sama?”

“Nn~, that’s right. The dragon has returned temporarily, so I think I will enjoy going downstream in a boat.”

“Then, let’s go together—”

Just as I tried to reply.

The grounds shook violently in a big way.

Earthquake?

I became concerned, because almost no earthquake ever occurred on Ichthyes continent.

Unlike the volcanic archipelago where I lived in my previous life, there were only few active volcanoes and faults here.

No, to begin with, I felt that this way of shaking was different from an earthquake. Then what was it?

“The ground is shaking...?”

“Oops, in such cases, you shouldn’t panic.

The tremors won’t be limited to only one time. Let’s open the doorway now.

Harold, you are to check the places where fire is likely to break out.”

In contrast to Harold, who was feeling shaken, Auguste was calm.

The moment each of us tried to move according to his instructions, a roaring sound like a lightning strike reverberated.

The slatted shutter was rattling by the wind which blowed violently outside the workshop.

Tirnanog started running quickly and opened the door without being frightened by the roaring sound.

Heated air flowed in from the opening of the entrance.

“What!? What happened!!”

[Look at that! The other side!]

Tirnanog pointed outside the building.

We ran towards him and saw the abnormal sight.

On the other side, there was a huge fire pillar rising.

Torrent of fire was blowing up to the sky.

In the periphery of the fire pillar, I could see the sparkling remnants of a magic circle that was fading away.

Was it a magic accident at some workshop, or was it a spontaneous discharge of fire magic?

[This is not the atmosphere of a forest fire.]

“Why... on the other side there is only an ancient ruin...”

I felt chills running through my spine as I heard the words that came out of Harold’s mouth.

Exchanging glances with Tirnanog, he seemed to have noticed it too.

Magical flame, ruins.

The ominous keywords were all present.

Perhaps, it seemed that we were too late in dealing with this.

Assuming that the place where the incident happened was in the aforementioned ruins of military weapons, was Actorius-sensei okay?

Actually, this was a very dangerous situation, right?

“Your Highness Auguste, Erica, make sure to escape to my family’s castle.

I will not let any of you get injured even by chance!

I will prepare the horses!”

Harold said so and ran to the stable.

Auguste slung his bag around his shoulder, and Tirnanog was also preparing to move quickly after lifting a heavy bag.

I watched the porcelain that was left in place, but as soon as I heard the footsteps of

the horses, I left the room with both of them.

As long as there were Gilbert's technology and the material of the Nibelheim territory, it could be reproduced as much as we want.

The horses on Gilbert's grounds were a dapple-gray horse and a black horse.

Harold rode on the gray horse with Auguste.

I rode on the black horse with Tirnanog.

[Erica, stop worrying about it. Your safety is the top priority.

Trust the gray mage. He is excellent regardless of his appearance, isn't he?]

"You're right, thank you."

I nodded a little after hearing Tirnanog's words.

While hiding the anxiety in my chest, we let the horses galloped to the Castle of Light.

¹ Zygos means Libra in Greek. It's the name of the eastern continent. So now we have Ichthyes (Pisces), Karkinos (Cancer), and Zygos (Libra).

² Silver is said to be able to reveal poison, although it only works if the poison was sulfur based, because silver tarnishes on contact with sulfur due to its reactivity.

By the way, from now on, **Cascadia** will be **Casketia**. This was actually me mistranslated since the beginning. キャスケティア is obviously Casketia =__= this is why you should check hundreds of times and not take google translate at face value.

Chapter 86

Hometown of Prodigal Sons (3)

The four of us ran in parallel along the road next to the river on our horses and headed toward Nibelheim's Castle of Light.

When we crossed over the drawbridge, the pillars of flames that had been blowing upwards from around the opposite shore of the workshop had come to an end.

As we arrived at Castle of Light, the castle was noisy.

Several employees were panicking.

"What is it! Is there something going on here too?"

"Harold-sama! Suddenly a man dyed in blood appeared in the courtyard."

"What did you say!?"

"Apparently, he seems to be a student from Lindis, but it's quite a serious injury, he's unconscious."

Blood drained from my face on words such as 'serious injury' and 'unconscious'.

While listening to the young servant, he took us to the courtyard.

Currently, there were neither the Earl Nibelheim nor the Countess, so the one that took charge in the courtyard was the steward who was in his prime.

In the middle of the courtyard, the figure of a student who was receiving first aid was lying there.

Even though it wasn't raining, there was a damp feeling on the lawn around him.

The dense smell of blood and the smell of burnt meat.

I rushed to the person without thinking and knelt beside him without being concerned about getting the blood on me.

Skin burned extensively from his left cheek to his left shoulder, and some fragments were stuck in his flank.

On the familiar uniform, the mark of crested ibis had melted from the high temperature.

That person's face who was covered with painful burns belonged to someone I knew well.

"Actorius-sensei...!"

"It's the student who I met yesterday! How did something like this happen!?"

Actorius-sensei's eyes opened slightly, he moved his lips, it looked like '*Erica-sama*'. When I took his hand, he squeezed out his voice faintly.

"...-tion... failure... , has activated... city's, people... in danger..."

After saying some words, Actorius-sensei's strength faded out. His hand fell to the ground limply.

Actorius-sensei didn't move even a quiver just like a dead body.

"Sensei, sensei!!"

"He's fine, he's still breathing. It seems he fainted because of blood loss. Leave him to the healers."

The steward said so after confirming Actorius-sensei's pulse to calm myself who had lost my composure.

While bringing along the servants who carried the stretcher, the healer came over. We had no choice but to just watch Actorius-sensei being carried away.

"Even if we're worried, it's unfortunate, but we're only able to watch over him quietly."

Harold pulled my hem and said so apologetically.

Suddenly, I noticed there were glasses that had fallen on my feet. Actorius-sensei's.

It probably fell off when he was being carried away.

The lens of the glasses cracked and had blood on it.

I thought I had to pick it up, but I couldn't move my body.

[Erica, the magic of that ruins probably hasn't stopped yet.

I feel that the signs of the strange magical power in the sky will grow dramatically from the previous one.]

I managed to recover from shock by Tirnanog's whisper.

This was not the time to be confused or weak.

I had to get a hold of myself.

By the way, what was Actorius-sensei trying to say just now?

Cancellation or demolition¹ of something had failed, and some dangerous magic had been activated.

We were to recommend evacuation for the people of Knot Reed.

Considering the situation of the magical power in the sky which Tirnanog had sensed, did I get his intentions right?

I had to tell everyone what Actorius-sensei was going to say on his behalf since he couldn't move.

"Sensei seemed to have told me that we need to evacuate.

The dangerous magic is still running in that ruins and there can be the second or third outbreak.

Moreover, there will be large-scale damage to the city."

I looked at Tirnanog, Auguste, and Harold in order.

Harold who understood this disturbing situation widened his eyes, and Auguste furrowed his brows.

[Then we should examine that ruin. If the scale of the act remains ambiguous, we wouldn't be able to move to evacuate.]

"But, we can't get any closer to those ruins anymore, right!?"

Ah, no, wait a second... if it is from our tower, we may be able to see them too!"

"Yes, please show us the way, Harold."

We went with Harold and rushed up the staircase.

Breathing was becoming difficult as I kept running, I tasted something like blood in my mouth.

But now I didn't have time to rest.

And then, we reached the top of the tower and looked around with heavy breathing.

I saw the sun leaning to the west, sinking across the horizon.

The sky gradually drew a gradation from deep indigo to orange, and the clouds were dyed in peach.

I could see the city that was engraved with complicated patterns of the canals when I lowered my sight to the ground.

"The ruins are there, so I guess the smoke is coming up from there."

"Wait a minute... yeah, the fire hasn't spread. It seems that it's almost extinguished."

Auguste stared at the direction pointed by Harold.

Perhaps he synchronized his senses with a dragon and observed it from many angles. Even if the damage on the aboveground part had subsided, the danger wasn't necessarily limited to the visible parts.

While I was controlling my breath, I also used the Wand of Glam Sight for Harold and Auguste.

"Eh, wha... what is this...!"

Looking at the sight revealed by Glam Sight, Harold screamed unexpectedly.

I heard someone sucked their breath reflexively.

I saw a few small flames floating above Knot Reed.

Concentrating my eyesight, it looked like magical characters were drawn in the sky with the red flames.

Characters made of the red flames increased one after another like a series of kimono sashes, forming multiple layers of magic circles.

According to Glam Sight, the huge magical structures seemed to be still in the launch preparation stage.

Floating in the sky above Knot Reed, they were not something of this world yet, the flames of fantasy.

The illustration of the collection of stories that I bought came to my mind.

A bright red sword floating in the indigo sky.

However, what floated before me didn't seem to have the same size as something like a sword.

In the light purple sky, sixteen huge red towers were floating upside-down.

Unscrupulously, I saw those things that floated upside-down in the night sky as Tokyo Towers.

Twilight town.

In the sky that gradually dyed from purple to indigo, the Cursed Sword of Fire that shone crimson was about to manifest.

"This isn't just some trivial incident. What's going to happen now?"

"It's the Cursed Sword of Fire..."

Harold's dispirited voice answered Auguste's question.

In spite of myself, I looked back to Harold.

Harold's dark green eyes told us that he was stained with terror.

"It's a legend conveyed in this place... about the calamity that fell on the northwestern land, the Cursed Sword of Fire.

Long ago, because the northern prince wanted this land, the western royal brother imposed the Heavens' Hell Fire over this land to protect it.

The royal brother didn't obediently back down, even when he was warned that the Hell Fire would destroy both enemies and allies.

'If it couldn't become mine then it should be destroyed', and the greedy prince decapitated the royal brother's neck.

As a result, there is a story that burning lava poured down and burned the Northwest in mere few minutes."

It was a different legend from the one I read in the book.

It was the legend Harold had heard from his father and mother.

"That calamity had destroyed all of this land."

Everyone was silenced by Harold's words.

Even though a disaster was about to take place in the near future, I was stunned without being able to do anything.

What should I do?

What *could* I do?

If nothing could be done right now, what would happen to the city?

The pillar of flames that were blowing up could be seen from the window.

Burned skin and eyeglasses painted with blood came to my mind.

The more I thought about it, the faster my heart beat.

What about Otou-sama?

What about Palug?

About Earl Nibelheim and Gilbert?

About the people in the city?

Even though all of them were beneath that magic?

As I kept thinking about it, nothing but bad things came to my mind, and I steadily became more and more stressed.

Not only me, but everyone who was there imagined that the world before us would be burned into ashes after this.

It was Auguste who broke the silence.

“But even so... after confirming the evacuation place, we should recommend evacuation. Even if we don’t know whether we will make it in time or not.”

[If we can investigate the location of the magic invocations and secure an evacuation place inside the city, there will be some lives saved, however...]

“But, how can we figure out exactly the places where this kind of large-scale magic appeared at...?”

“There is one ancient dragon on the highest altitude of this land right now. Let’s check the current situation with her vision.”

“You... you can do something like that...?”

Harold had an expression that showed he didn’t understand yet.

Certainly, it wouldn’t be obvious unless one experienced it.

“...Auguste-sama, can I also join you?”

“Aa, that way I am also saved. Regarding magic, it is better to have your viewpoint.”

As he said so, Auguste grasped my hands.

Thereupon, a prompt sensation of sharing was carried out, and visual sharing with the dragon far beyond started.

In the blink of an eye, I was looking at the city of Knot Reed, with a view from the top of the sky.

It was a beautiful twilight of the city of canals.

“Most people haven’t noticed the magic spreading in the sky, huh.”

“Yes, I don’t think they noticed.”

Through the eyes of the dragon, although it was not to the extent of Glam Sight, magic information did come to mind, so we would confirm the location of the sixteen Cursed

Swords of Fire in Knot Reed.

Above two aircraft carriers, a ship building workshop area, a large town warehouse, the garrison of King of Ignitia.

Central part of the canal rings, Town of All Kinds of Goods, Water Palace, cathedral, the guild hall, the King's vacation home, and then the church that was attached to the treatment center.

The rest was probably the places and buildings which were considered important areas.

They were on such detestable positions, that they were likely to directly hit the plaza altogether which was a possible refuge place.

"The trouble here is that there is no way to run in the main urban areas. If we jump into the canal, will we be able to manage somehow?"

"No, that kind of fire that was made by magic cannot be extinguished with just water."

A certain person was reflected in my sight.

On the new aircraft carrier, I found the Duke of Aurelia, Ernst—my father.

"Otou-sama...?"

"Duke Aurelia was supposed to be observing the fitting-out of the new aircraft carrier from early afternoon today. Perhaps, that's why he is there."

A stern gaze was staring at the sky.

Otou-sama seemed to be aware of this incident quickly.

I became flustered when I realized the possibility that there was Palug who had turned into me around Otou-sama.

I made a quick confirmation around the deck, but I couldn't find her.

Perhaps, she was already evacuated by Otou-sama?

I returned my eyes to Otou-sama.

He had just used a wand, green light was gathering in his eyes and I inhaled.

It was Glam Sight.

It was followed up by another wand.

I didn't know the details of the wand.

He raised his wand solemnly and released magic towards the Cursed Sword of Fire that was deployed above the old aircraft carrier.

It expanded and formed several times so that the white light restrained the red Cursed Sword of Fire.

It was Dispel Magic.

The huge magical structure glowed more intensely.

The thing that looked like an upside-down crimson tower instantly collapsed and materialized, and at the same time, it melted down.

So it was useless even when one dismantled the magic?

Huge mass of red lava drops rained down on the old aircraft carrier.

The old aircraft carrier which was directly hit by the lava gradually sunk as its hatch became full of holes.

But unexpectedly the sea surface around the old aircraft carrier was frozen.

Perhaps Otou-sama used a wand to freeze it.

The damage to the old aircraft carrier seemed to have come to an end.

Otou-sama gave directions to the people around him and was in charge of the evacuation and rescue.

After seeing up to this point, I was struck by a sensation resembling severe eye strain.

I felt the limits of the visual sharing and let go of Auguste's hands.

"What's going on since a while ago...?"

Harold asked with anxious expression.

“Otou-sama interfered with the Cursed Sword of Fire by using a dismantling magic, but it was useless.”

“That—”

“...means we’re out of options, I fear.”

“Why!? Magic that cannot be demolished is weird, right!?”

[If one interferes with that magic to dismantle it, then whatever magic it may be it will probably materialize on the spot and collapse upon itself.

All of cause and effect, as well as space have been twisted towards that end.

It would be almost impossible to stop its manifestation in this world.]

Hearing Tirnanog’s explanation, Harold was at a loss for words.

Auguste had a bitter expression and looked down.

If those weapons couldn’t be stopped from appearing in this world, what would happen to the people under those swords?

What would happen to those in Knot Reed city?

Even with only some imaginative power, it was easy to tell; lots of deaths.

With empty eyes, Harold said:

“Everything was supposed to go well from now on, everything should have started from today.”

His father was now trying to keep hope in that city.

It should be the day of complete reversal, from the ruin predicament into a revival from hopeless situation, with a single move.

Gilbert who remained a coward despite being well experienced in the ways of the world, finally got to go and see his father.

It was the day when the two who cares about each other but had a discord for a long time, finally reconciled and had a long talk.

Was it alright to let it be as it was?

No, it was not.

I felt myself boiling up with rage from the bottom's of my heart at this irrational situation.

It was the first time in my life that I became this mad, including my previous one.

I absolutely detested the fact that the people who were going to be finally happy, were getting trampled over this easily.

And then, my head was getting cold enough to freeze.

Inside my freezing cranial room, my thoughts were strangely clear.

It was very similar to a revolving lantern².

I closed my eyes and traced back the river of my memories to its depths.

Sixteen upside-down towers of flames covering Knot Reed.

The city of canal rings that was overlooked from the sky.

Magical light built by Harold's hands.

A golem that was crushed into pieces with countless bullets shot out from a wand.

Seven rainbows standing up from Rainbow Strap.

The gray ocean of Aurelia.

The clear waters of Ignitia and the clear sky.

Petals that were scattering down.

The sky where hundreds of dragons were fluttering about and dancing.

The beast of the Sun showing a glowing claw.

The falling prince and Feather Falling afterglow which looked like white feathers fluttering and falling.

The grotesque Sun depicted in the ancient mural painting.

Running through the star crystal ruins using Levitation and Pass Wall.

Silver magic that stopped time.

Arms of countless deaths extending from the black beast.

Mechanical labyrinth and moonlight signs.

The sweet taste of Onii-sama's chocolate.

Dizziness and mirror.

Myriad phantom beasts drawn in plenty of books.

The stars that disappeared in the blink of an eye.

The singing voice of my mother heard while napping.

My memory shattered like shards and fell down from overhead.

I picked up what I needed now from among them.

I created a solution by combining those elements with clattering sounds.

I opened my eyes slowly.

Along with the determination to not let this world be destroyed.

“Say, everyone, I wonder if you will listen to me. I would like to ask for your cooperation now.”

Harold who was dispirited, Auguste who had a mystified expression, and Tirnanog turned their line of sights towards me.

And I was smiling at them with the brightest smile possible.

¹ So Actorius-sensei only said ‘解’ for his first word. This could be either ‘解除’ (cancellation) or ‘解体’ (demolition) which both contained the kanji 解.

² A similar expression to the one in ch 16, ‘like a lantern light’. It is referring to the various vision appearing in mind when someone is about to die.

Chapter 87

Hometown of Prodigal Sons (4)

With a side glance at the ultra-wide area magic Cursed Swords of Fire, I decided to start with the confirmation of the prerequisites concerning our future task.

If something was off the point, everything could be ruined.

From here on, I couldn't afford making any mistakes.

"First off, Harold. May I confirm something?"

"...What is it?"

I asked Harold who replied after staring at me carefully.

"Substances created from nothing by alchemy materialize only for a short time in this world.

Can this be applied to our current situation as well?"

"Aa, precious metals and precious stones, especially those with big masses, are about five minutes at most."

"Five minutes. So it's five minutes after all."

"Lava is about five minutes, but the flames that have burned will remain in this world for a longer time and will cause a vicious calamity."

"Right. I understand."

That was good.

I felt relieved after hearing Harold's answer.

If this was the case, I would be able to do it in the way I planned.

Next, I asked Tirnanog.

"Then, when do you think that Cursed Sword of Fire will fall?"

[It is such a huge magical construction spell, but the composition speed is fast. Based on the description of the literature, that's right... it will be around forty minutes from now to its completion.]

It would be difficult to evacuate the citizens with that time.

Even if they escaped from beneath one cursed sword, they would get caught in the fall zone of another cursed sword.

So that was the reason Tirnanog unusually hesitated in front of Harold before, huh.

"...I mean, why are you asking such a thing now!"

Harold hounded me with a frustrated appearance.

Alright, I felt glad that he seemed to be healthy enough to get angry.

Harold was going to have plenty of works from now on, so it was really good that he was not in a lethargic condition.

"Harold, you, no, *we* might be able to save this town."

"...What... do you mean?"

"That Cursed Sword of Fire cannot be touched, dismantled or dispelled, but there is one way."

"W-what is it. Don't put on airs, just say it quickly!"

Harold who was impatient urged me.

Auguste and Tirnanog were gazing at me quietly, waiting for my words.

"We cannot prevent the completion of the cursed swords, but we can prevent the finished cursed swords from falling to the city as lava with wide-area magic."

"That's absurd! In order to deploy a city-wide area magic, we will need dozens of Hafan's mages.

Such a great number of people, where can we get them from!"

"What if I say that the three of us... me, Harold, and Auguste-sama are enough?"

Harold became silent as if he had forgotten his words.

Auguste and Tirnanog were staring at me, looking as if they were taken aback.

“Harold, you will have to do mass filling now.

The spell that you need to charge is Levitation. The number of charges is 990 times.”

Harold’s facial expression changed slowly from astonishment to calm.

It seemed that his technician brain was stimulated.

I saw Harold’s change and my mouth formed a smile.

“Can you do it?”

“...I can. I will do it. I have never made it, but I know the composition of that spell.

But, by Levitation, what do you... ah!”

Harold’s eyes widened.

It seemed that Harold who had become familiar with magic and wands from an early age already understood.

“I see, the duration of lava’s materialization time is five minutes, and the effect time of the normal Levitation is about the same.

Levitation is also characterized by a rise in efficiency as its amplification increases.

If we extend the range of the effect with Wand Alteration and wrap it around...!!”

“Correct. As it will need to be used 66 times per cursed sword, we will need 990 for all 15 cursed swords.”

[I see, that is a method unique to you who can alter the power of wands without limits.]

“Extension... it’s like the signature move of Duke Aurelia... yeah, I think it’s a good idea.”

Tirnanog and Auguste also nodded.

But actually this alone was not enough.

And it was Harold who was the first to notice.

“Wait... how are you going to aim at them? Simultaneous aiming to 15 places, and

around the entire Knot Reed no less.

It's impossible for us to just aim at them in the regular way, so maybe Raptor Sight... no, that'd be impossible.

I don't have time to charge two wands in large quantities."

"That's why we need another person."

I nodded slowly, and gazed at Auguste.

"I see, aiming... that's my role, huh."

"I'm saved that this conversation will be quick. Of course you will participate in this plan."

"You don't even consider that I will refuse, huh. That's fine. I will place my bet on you, too."

I smiled at Auguste who had understood the entire strategy.

We were ready now.

From here on, we only had to believe in Harold.

"Then, I will monitor whether there is any change in that magic.

When the magic is ready, Erica, I will share the eyes of the dragon with you."

Auguste said so and stared at the sky.

I took out a wand from my bag that Tirnanog had brought for me.

The Wand of Levitation already had 100 charges in it.

I held the wand and presented it to Harold.

"I think you can do it, no, you are the only one who can do it, hey, partner. Isn't that right?"

"...What the heck, that kind of irresponsible and sloppy trust as if leaving it all to me."

Haah~~, Harold exhaled a long sigh, looking at me with serious eyes.

“But, I will not let you down.”

Harold’s eyes became slightly moist with tears.

He wiped them so as to conceal it, then he accepted the wand.

Harold squatted down on the stone floor of the tower and spread his work tools.

“Let’s get started with my work!”

Harold rolled his sleeves up and wore his black leather gloves.

He put on his goggles with a smack as the finishing touch.

“If we charge 1000 shots on a wand that can originally contain only 100 shots, the burden on the wand will be way more than ten folds.

First of all, let’s release all the magical powers inside and change the magical powers compression format from scratch.”

Harold loosened the ferrule and aimed the wand towards the ground.

He confirmed that everyone except himself had took a distance from the wand, and he released the magical powers charged inside the wand.

A strong flash of light like a camera’s flash.

The magical powers that were released all at once gouged the ground.

“Uh!”

A runaway magical power bounced back to Harold’s right cheek.

From the wound where the pale spark hit, fresh blood dripped down.

“Harold, are you okay?”

“Haha, that helped shorten the time. This level of injury, it’s nothing.”

As Harold made a frivolous talk, he reconfigured the wand with precise movements like a machine.

“Heeh, this is...”

[What’s wrong, Harold.]

“Well, to think that I can see the wonderful work of Visitor’s Clan in a place like this.”

[You... unexpectedly, it seems you still have the composure to say something like that.]

As Tirnanog said so in amazement, Harold laughed unreservedly while baring his teeth.

“It’s because I rarely tinker with such an amazing wand.

Both durability and precision are different from ready-made items.

But, as expected, ten times as much content amplification is an unprecedented way of using this wand that hadn’t been taken into consideration when making it.

I will also take the other wands apart. I have to use everything usable in our arsenal.”

As he said, Harold began to take apart the Wand of Leap and Feather Falling.

He broke off one third of Feather Falling wand’s shaft’s Griffin bone and cut it into a hook shape.

Then scraped off one end of the wyvern bone from Levitation wand’s shaft material into the same shape and combined them, glueing them together without gaps.

Next he took out vellum paper and cut them into thin bands.

“I’m pretty sure that Long-Armed Ernst’s wands are carved with old poetries of Visitor’s Clan, right?

As you’d expect not even I remember the poetry of Visitor’s Clan, but the poems of my hometown are supposed to have the same effect.”

He soaked a pen in a special ink mixed with several kinds of chemicals.

Wrote the poetry on vellum paper, smeared it with glue, and wrapped it around the shaft.

Certainly, this was quicker than engraving it.

He reattached Levitation’s amber wand head and yellow brass handle to the newly assembled wand shaft.

As it made use of the same core material as the Levitation wand, he appended just enough of the Feather Falling core material to match the elongated shaft.

Finally, he sealed the end with the magnetite ferrule used as head for the wand of Leap.

“It has become boorish, but its durability is guaranteed. I will only have to believe in and charge this guy, now it’s a race against time.”

Harold looked at the wand with a serious expression and built the spells to charge it.

One, two, three—

As he built the spells with unparalleled accuracy, I had forgotten to breath before I knew it.

One hundred.

The magical structure was disturbed, and the released magical power grazed Harold’s right cheek.

The torrent of magical power burned his cheek in a way that it crossed his still fresh wound.

“Are you okay, Harold!?”

However, rather than groaning in pain, Harold was immersed in charging the wand without blinking.

What an amazing concentration.

I applied a handkerchief to his cheek softly.

“That town is the place where I grew up, I absolutely won’t forgive anyone hurting the people in my city.”

While muttering, he kept on working quietly.

It was a high-speed spell construction and charging that didn’t stop even for a moment.

Spells were built and the wand was charged at a rate that it was now a picture burned into my memory.

200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900.

The old wound in his right arm became visible as it was stained red.

That scar was like a torrent of a burning flame.

“Erica, Harold. Changes have begun to appear in the sky’s appearance!”

Auguste who was observing the Cursed Sword of Fire from the sky viewpoint raised his voice.

After checking the time, it was about three minutes remaining.

“Please wait, Your Highness. I will finish this in a minute.”

Listening to Harold’s words, I lined up next to Auguste and joined hands with him.

“Isn’t it painful?”

“I have become a little used to it. Auguste-sama, I would like to know the situation of the magic if possible, is it alright with you?”

“Aa, it’s fine.”

Applied Glam Sight on the current borrowed dragon’s eyes.

It would probably be a heavy burden on my brain, but right now it couldn’t be helped.

I used the Wand of Glam Sight.

Before my eyes, a group of huge flames illuminated the twilight town with abnormal brightness.

The sky of Knot Reed city where it had started to be covered with fog at night was dyed with the fantasy flames and seemed to be stained bright red.

Looking from the sky, the Cursed Swords of Fire’s large magic circles were composed like a ribbon made of brightly burning flames.

When exercising Glam Sight for the dual visual information of human and dragon, a fierce headache hit me.

Painful.

It was terribly painful.

Ah, but.

This was the town where these people lived.

I could see the geometric city composed of circular canal rings.

Buildings with vermilion roofs on top of white walls were lining up properly in the large City of Canals.

Even at this time the city of Knot Reed was greeting the lively afternoon as usual.

The engraver who had finished his work was warming his eyes.

A hostess of a standing bar who was in the height of business was carrying the beers.

The shopkeeper whose face was sweaty as he cooked the processed meat at the storefront.

Worn out people that were heading towards the bar after buying anti-travel sickness potions.

I could see the sidewalk where the perfumer Bell was chasing the barrel.

A girl who seemed to work at the studio across the sidewalk entered the perfume store where a signboard with a lady on it was hanging down.

A little boy who was lost finally found by his mother.

His mother gently lifted the boy up and threw a honey-colored candy into his mouth.

The boy smiled happily.

The notary who got off from the carriage was staring at the sky in front of the guild hall.

I could see Turm Wand Store.

I wondered what kind of conversation Gilbert who finally went to see his father was having.

I wondered how Turm elder greeted his son who came home.

I hoped they were happy.

Water Palace was shining very beautifully in the dusk.

Inside, Earl Nibelheim was using Gilbert's porcelain to advance negotiations to his advantage.

The view of a beautiful city that looked like a miniature.

Many people were living there.

And then, the Cursed Sword of Fire which was floating above all of them, seemed to be a beautiful flame art.

Yet, that was only the outside appearance of the detestable weapon.

"Alriiiiiight!!! I did it, partner!!"

Harold's squeezed out shouts reached my ears.

At the same time as he ran up to me, I held out my right hand quietly, and the wand was passed to me vigorously.

I clenched my hand over it.

This was our ace.

[Erica, I'm sure you will save this town.]

"...Thank you, Tir."

Tirnanog's words were like a good luck charm; they relieved me of my worries.

Now then, I had to do my job this time.

This was the Wand of Levitation which Harold had worked hard to build its spell and to charge its magic.

With nervous and cold fingertips, I directed the wand towards the sky.

I pointed the tip of the wand towards the center of the Cursed Swords of Fire.

I knew what I had to do.

The rest was to do it quickly and accurately.

While imagining what happened when I touched the Rainbow Strap, I brought up the magical power that was sleeping inside the wand.

At first it was pulled out as I wanted it to, but I immediately hit a strong resistance.

While paying attention so as not to let it go, slowly but surely I spun the magical power and unfastened it finely.

I picked a few of the selected threads and weaved it into another shape.

Into the same shape as the range specifying part in Feather Falling.

Was this really okay?

There has to be a better way, I was driven by such anxiety.

For an instant, my hand hesitated to wave the wand.

“Don’t worry, Erica, you can do it.”

Auguste whispered, gripping my hand tighter.

I nodded, hardened my resolve and waved the wand.

“Levitation—”

A golden magic circle similar to that of Feather Falling was formed above the place near the center of the city.

It seemed that the range extension and shape change had succeeded.

Anyway, I felt relieved.

Since the path of magical power was still connected, all that was left was to expand the scope of the spell.

I poured the magical power left inside the wand towards the magic circle.

I enlarged the magic circle proportionally to the amount of magical power poured, and continued to draw out magical power from the wand at the same time.

If I rushed I would distort the spell and destroy it.

As if swelling a two-dimensional bubble, I carefully and slowly inflated it.

Golden light covered the city.

Through the eyes of the dragon, I could see that the people in the city were becoming noisy.

[Erica, it has started.]

Pointed out by Tirnanog, I focused on the Cursed Sword of Fire.

The materialization of lava was starting.

Was it earlier than we thought?

No, I concentrated too much and didn't notice the passage of time, huh.

"It's alright, partner. Believe in my wand. I also believe in you."

I nodded to Harold's brief words and pulled the magical power a little bit stronger.

As if screaming, the wand caused violent magical vibrations.

However, the wand managed to withstand the burden.

The completely materialized Cursed Swords of Fire started falling down.

Almost at the same time, the magic circle reached the predicted falling point of the last cursed sword.

While forcibly suppressing the recoil which had increased to its limit with my own inhibitory constitution, I completed the magic.

"—launched!"

The moment the tips of the Cursed Swords of Fire came into contact with the golden magic circle, the magic circle shattered and turned into golden feather-like fragments.

At that moment, all the lava that fell down stopped mid-air as if time had stopped.

From stop motion it turned into slow motion.

Lava began to flow upward as if it went back in time.

The Cursed Swords of Fire which shone in the burning heat became countless drops and rose in the indigo sky.

Like sky lanterns, those drops of lava scattered in the indigo sky were illuminating the city of Knot Reed.

Their light was shed on all the waterways.

Everyone was watching that sight.

I was not an exception, but I snapped out of it at once and immediately confirmed detailed information using Glam Sight.

“Levitation started normally... duration, ten minutes... it’s a success.”

“We did it... we did it... , we did it...”

Harold crouched down on the spot as if his waist gave out and burst into tears.

[Erica, you have worked hard. It was a wonderful magic.]

Tirnanog caressed my head with a big palm.

Auguste whose forehead was drenched in sweat, winked jokingly.

Somewhat unexpectedly, I felt as if the ground beneath my feet had disappeared.

I had no strength left at all in my feet, knees, waist, and my back.

I felt as if I had become a mollusk.

As I toppled over, Auguste supported me in a hurry and embraced me.

“Erica!?”

“Huh... somehow... my strength...?”

I couldn’t gather any strength, and at this time, Auguste was supposed to be tired too,

sorry about this.

I meant to say such a thing.

However, only mutterings that didn't make any sense went out of my mouth.

Everyone was looking anxiously at my face.

I am fine.

More importantly, shouldn't you be wiping that runny nose of yours, Harold?

I wanted to say so, but I was already at my limit to even keep my consciousness.

My eyelids became heavy, and my sight was enveloped in darkness.

I fell into a deep sleep through the comfortable fatigue of having carried through with something.

Burden of seeing through the eyes of the dragon + Glam Sight (which is a burden on the brain because of the dual vision) + using wand alteration in a city-wide scale = exhausted-as-hell Erica.

~~15×60=900, but why did Erica ask for it to be charged 990 times? I think it's because, as Gilbert said, if you use wand alteration, the spell inside become distorted and might not come out. So, it's a room for errors, I think.~~ Also, it's only 15 because one of the cursed swords already dispelled by Ernst.

If you don't get it: lava formed by magic can only materializes for 5 minutes at most, and Levitation effect time is 10 minutes. So when the lava gets levitated, before Levitation effect time limit is reached, the lava will already be gone. A simple solution that can only be done by someone with seven-rainbows inhibitory value, a genius wandmaker, and a powerful esper.

The crisis has been averted, but does this mean her death flag is destroyed? Let's see.

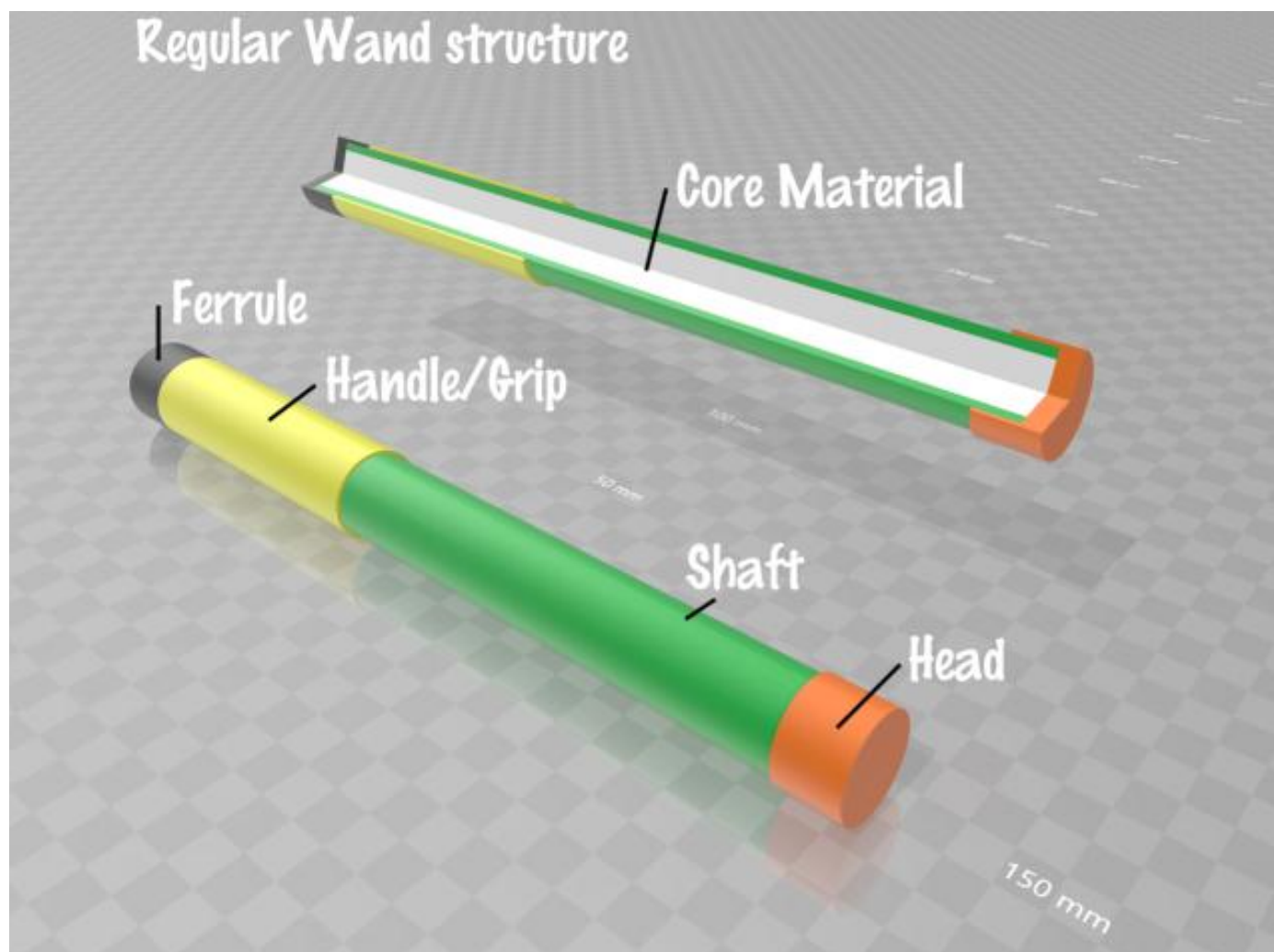
xtostos: 66 charges per Sword. $66 \times 15 = 990$. (clover: sorry about that! ><)

Turns out, according to raw Erica didn't reach the limit of her inhibition trait. The limit she was hitting was that of the wand... She's tough.

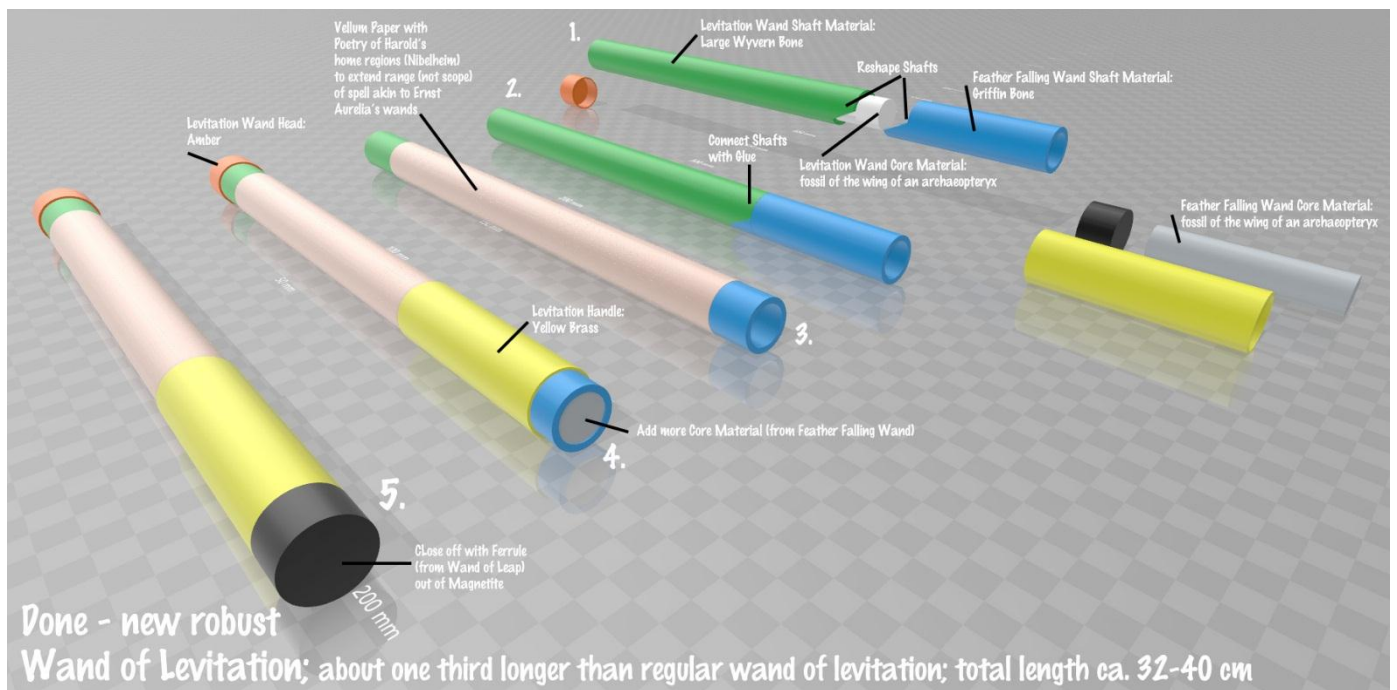
Many small edits, most importantly the assembly description of the wand. I have added pictures to help visualize what happened. It's concept visuals only, actual wands look better =)

Lastly, there was some confusion about Harold's and Erica's roles in this super sized

spell. Harold created a robust wand that can withstand much pressure, and enabled the greater range (i.e. how far away from the caster the spell can be placed – in our case several kilometres from the top of the Tower to the center of the town) and charged it, while Erica modified the nature of the spell (to resemble the Feather Fall activation), controlled it and balanced it against the limits of the wand and took care of the scope of (i.e. the area covered by) the spell.



Regular Wand Structure. 25-30cm long, roughly cylindrical. Core material is clad in shaft material, one end of these is stopped by the wand head, the other may be stopped by a ferrule. On end opposite of the wand head there is a handle/grip clad around part of the shaft. Diameter of wand at grip probably around 2-5cm.



Step by step construction of Harold's on the spot Wand of Levitation. In summary, combine the shafts and cores of original Wand of Levitation and Wand of Feather Falling, add vellum around now elongated shaft. Poems on that vellum enable spell to be aimed further away from caster later on. Then add head and handle of Wand of Levitation and ferrule of Wand of Leap. Then charge with 990 Levitation spells. Done.

Chapter 88

Hometown of Prodigal Sons (5)

The afternoon of the next day after we escaped from the fear of the calamity Cursed Sword of Fire.

Along with a refreshing sensation of sleeping soundly, I woke up.

[Hm, so you're already up, Erica.]

[My, my, what a relief.]

To the phantom beasts that were looking into my face and felt relieved, I replied with a smile.

After I fainted, it seemed that I was examined by a healer who was in the Castle of Light.

Although they were worried that I was in a critically ill condition caused by magical reaction, it was determined that I was in a state of sleep that simply comes from fatigue.

After that, it seemed that I was brought by Tirnanog back to Water Palace under the veil of secrecy.

I had no memory of those things.

[Well, I was not worried at all.]

[Lies. Even though you didn't sleep the whole time and kept staring at her anxiously.]

[Eei, shut up, you foolish cat!]

Palug avoided Tirnanog's attack which was unleashed to hide his embarrassment while somersaulting on the bed.

They were good friends as usual.

[That blond haired prince's perceptiveness was good and that saved us some trouble.]

He concealed the fact that you were traveling incognito.]

“So Auguste-sama did such a thing, huh...”

Even though about such a matter Auguste was also birds of a feather.

Where and what we were doing at that time was likely to become a secret between us.

[But, you know, it seems Ernst is busy with a rather troublesome aftermath.]

It seemed that it was already deep in the night when Otou-sama and Palug returned to Water Palace.

Apparently it took hours to confirm that the weapon’s rampage wouldn’t occur a second time.

After that it appeared that Otou-sama immediately returned to the naval port in a non-stop round trip.

It was due to the post-event dealing of the old-style aircraft carrier wreckage.

Fortunately, there were no people nor beasts on that ship, so it was limited to physical damage only.

Still, even like that he only managed to return here about an hour ago.

Thanks to that he didn’t notice the fact that I was sound asleep due to fatigue, I might have been lucky.

Well, but, Otou-sama had to be considerably tired at that time, I should show my appreciation for his hard work.

“After that, how is Actorius-sensei...?”

[That gray mage, huh. A while ago the redhaired brat came as a messenger.

The treatment went well, he is not in a life-threatening condition anymore. You can feel relieved.]

“I see, that’s good...”

Actorius-sensei seemed to had been transported to a free clinic served by Knot Reed’s noted healers.

It was because his condition was unmanageable with the healers who were invited to the Castle of Light at that time.

“I’ve troubled both of you. Thank you for your hard work.”

[It’s fine~. It was surely easier than finishing off that Cursed Sword of Fire.]

[Umu. Erica has the largest achievement. This degree is neither annoying nor troubling.]

The two phantom beasts nodded somewhat proudly.

They were happy as if my achievement were their own.

Thus, when we finished sharing a lot of information, a message from Otou-sama was brought along with our lunch.

It seemed that after lunch Otou-sama would be heading to the free clinic where Actorius-sensei was brought in for questioning.

I told the servant that I would like to accompany him as well and took a late lunch.



Otou-sama and I took a small boat and moved towards the free clinic.

Tirnanog and Palug were in another small boat with a caretaker.

The clinic was a pure white building, and the inside was separated by a thin veil.

Moving through the veil, I found a gray-haired figure lying on the bed.

He was wrapped round and round with bandages, but I could barely recognize that he was Actorius-sensei.

When he noticed our visit, he smiled with a crying face.

We sat on the chairs next to the bed.

Otou-sama activated Historia Electrum to record their conversation, while I quietly listened to their conversation.

In the lump of amber, a light resembling a flame was flickering.

“On that day, you seem to have been in the ruins where the incident happened as a member of the investigation team from Lindis.”

“Yes. I was working on dismantling the artificial spirit that was integrated in the deepest part.”

“I see, the technology in that ruins was an artificial spirit derived from Hafan.

You seem to have joined the investigation team just a few days ago, but how much do you know about the content of the investigation?

It’s sufficient even if it’s just the extent of what you know, so please let me know for future correspondence.”

“...Perhaps, it may have been me who was able to grasp the situation of that ruin the most.”

Actorius-sensei stared at his bandaged palm and became silent for a while.

He started talking slowly about the sealed ruins of the Cursed Sword of Fire.

“I was comparing the investigation report from two months ago with the past data in the reference room of Lindis.

It was the materials from 200 years ago when the ruins were sealed off and blockaged, along with documents from 600 years ago when they were first built.

As a result, I discovered the possibility of a serious danger, and then I applied to become additional personnel in haste and rushed to the site.”

“Hm, and that danger was?”

“The dangerous facilities that should have been shut down two hundred years ago had been connected once again to the group of spells that form the main part of the system.

Umm... since it is obfuscated, it is hard to understand, but please see a copy of this document.”

Actorius-sensei spread the three sheets of vellum papers with difficulty since he could only use his right hand.

The places marked on the document written two months ago was indeed consistent with the material of six hundred years ago, not two hundred years ago.

“This passage is a part related to a mass destruction ability larger in scale than even the previously known Cursed Swords of Fire.

It reacts to a high ranking fire spirit or phantom beast, and causes a chain explosion involving the nearby ley lines, or so it said.

What is still a mystery is the purpose of building it... in case it ever activated it was estimated to be on a scale that can evaporate the whole northwestern area.”

“Hm... that is somewhat excessive for a self-destruct function if it was merely intended to conceal some technology.

The use of artificial spirits as weapons is prohibited, and fire-natured phantom beasts haven’t been confirmed for the last 100 years, though...”

“Even with that, we could not say for certain that those conditions would never be met.”

Hearing the words of Actorius-sensei, my father nodded.

Huh? Was it possible one outrageous incident could have occurred had Palug entered the investigation site?

If there had been no barrier to block the intrusion of phantom beasts, she would have indeed triggered those one in a million risk conditions.

If there had been no one double checking the investigation report from two months ago.

Or, if Actorius-sensei hadn’t noticed the suspicious parts of the materials.

Imagining the worst, I shivered.

“At the time of the incident, five lecturers and students who were dispatched from Lindis and excelled in barriers, were in charge of the processing.

It was because we had to isolate artificial spirits severely before dismantling it.

It isn’t certain whether the construction of the barriers was insufficient, or whether some magic was misinterpreted as disassembly attempt.

As you know, the spell of Cursed Sword of Fire got triggered with the investigation team as it’s target, and the hot lava materialized.”

Actorius-sensei talked about the flow of the incident, confessing matter-of-factly.

“I was caught in the collapse of the ruins by the explosion, and was about to be swallowed by the lava and flames that flowed in.

However, at the next moment as I felt intense pain and heat, I collapsed on the Castle of Light.

Perhaps I was transferred by a colleague who was in my immediate side.

The castle was built on a thick ley line, so it might have been easy to aim as a quick transition destination.”

Those gray eyes shook slightly.

It seemed like the emotions he repressed until now had overflowed, his eyes were full of anxiety.

“What happened to him... no, to the personnel other than me who were there?

If they had transited via other ley lines, they should have been transferred to Water Palace or the cathedral, so how are they...?”

Actorius-sensei asked, but Otou-sama cast his eyes down and shook his head.

Otou-sama responded with a rough voice after a long silence.

“Unfortunately, I have confirmed the annihilation of the entire investigation team aside from you.”

“Eh... , no way...”

Actorius-sensei shed tears as he overcame with surprise.

The tears spilled out without stop, and his sobbing continued for some time.

This might be my first time I heard an adult man crying.

When Otou-sama stopped the Historia Electrum, a flame-like sparkle was engraved on the amber.

Waiting for Actorius-sensei to compose himself, Otou-sama stood up.

“It seems that Lindis will gather new personnel and reorganize the investigation team. The investigation and sealing will be resumed in a safer manner.”

“...Well, I think that’s the right thing to do, too.”

Actorius-sensei nodded with a calm voice.

Although in truth he was still upset, it seemed that he was forcing himself to be calm.

To support my claim, his tears were still spilling out.

In the end, I couldn't say anything, I didn't know what kind of words should I say to him.

We left the Actorius-sensei's hospital room without further words.

On the way home from the free clinic.

On the boat, Otou-sama caressed my head and said:

"I asked the healer, but it seems that there are almost no impairments left in Elric-kun's body.

It was fortunate that he was found quick and got the appropriate first aid treatment.

It will also take a few years to transplant the skin for his burn marks, and if he continues the magical treatment those burn marks will be restored.

But... we have to wait for time to heal the wounds of his heart."

"...Yes."

The city of Knot Reed as seen from atop the canal had spontaneously been overcome with a festive mood.

The river bank and the ferries were colorfully decorated, and people were drinking together cheerfully.

Everyone was celebrating their good fortune in escaping the legendary calamity.

On the ship, people in costumes and masked clowns danced, and bards played instruments and sang songs.

Tears were spilled for those who died, and music was played for those who survived.



That evening, which was the last night I spent in Knot Reed.

People gathered more than usual at the dinner party in Water Palace.

This was because there were many people who saw a glimpse of the one who had

worked on the Cursed Sword of Fire last night.

Right, one of the three people who got involved in the wide-scale Levitation.

If one listened carefully, one would hear the name of that meritorious person being whispered.

The name was Harold Nibelheim III.

(Indeed, from the information on Glam Sight, they could learn who the creator of Levitation was.)

That time was full of actions, and I hadn't minded a small detail like that.

Because it was not Hafan's magic, the name of the performer was not disclosed, it was a small mercy.

Cheers roared up in the vicinity of the entrance of the hall.

It seemed that Harold had appeared, he was accompanied by Earl Nibelheim.

People encircled both of them while giving praises for the young meritorious person such as '*A rare genius that is found one in ten years*' or '*An outstanding talent that is found one in a hundred years.*'

Harold was being jostled by the adults, he was laughing and didn't seem to be annoyed by that.

I thought it was a very joyous occasion.

But, somehow I needed a little distance from this lively banquet.

I ran away from the bustle and headed towards the balcony.

I wondered if this would be my last night seeing this beautiful night view.

Before I knew it, there were a small golem and a phantom-beast-turned-cat at my feet.

[Erica, are you not going to see the redheaded brat?]

"He seems to be a popular person, even if I go, I will only get in the way."

[Then, let's go to Auguste's location~!]

"Palug, it's fine to go by yourself, you know?"

[Eeh~, don't wanna~! That's somehow embarrassing!]

[You are not even a young girl anymore...]

While the two phantom beasts were cracking jokes, I looked at the sky.

The moon that looked like a nail of a cat was floating behind the dark blue night sky.

Since the moonlight was more subdued than usual, I could see the weak light of the stars shining brightly.

I felt like I had calmed down a bit after seeing them.

“Yaa, Erica. May I also have your time?”

From the other side of the curtain, Auguste's face suddenly appeared.

With a shiny white silk formal wear and his golden hair tied up, he seemed to match the formal wear of this region.

Mrrroow~~~, the golden cat cried in a delighted voice.

Tonight the cat seemed to be very satisfied.

“What about your job as a prince, Auguste-sama?”

“Occasionally I can stretch my wings, right? Today's leading role seems to be Harold anyway.”

“You seem to have been stretching nothing but your wings recently, though?”

Aah, but there is nothing unnatural about that, huh. Auguste-sama's main role is as an angel after all.”

“How harsh. Well, you can bully me later, shall we toast first?”

Auguste handed me one of the glasses he had.

The clear light green liquid was probably grape juice.

“What should we toast to?”

“To the excellent, rich and beautiful golden country, Aurelia. And then, to the peaceful night we won with our own hands, how about it?”

Auguste and I made our glasses touched each other.

A clanking sound played by our glasses echoed.

“However, is it alright for you not to come forward too, Erica? You are also a meritorious person, right?”

“I’m not good at that kind of thing. Since I was travelling incognito, I don’t have any excuse for my father if I come forward.

Auguste-sama too, aren’t you going to come forward?”

“I am good at that kind of thing, but I was also travelling incognito, so I have to pass.”

I tasted the grapes when I sipped my glass.

It was the taste of autumn’s good harvest.

Harold, who was barely able to sneak away from the barrage of questions, came over to the balcony when the two of us were talking about trifling matters.

“Aah~~, I’ve been looking for you guys! Why are you in a remote place like this-!”

Harold was wearing a perfect-fit dark green formal wear with his red hair smoothed down neatly.

Although it was not much, but it was a noble appearance that didn’t make him seem like a wand store brat.

“Heeh, you look like a young noble properly when you dressed up like that, huh~.”

“Isn’t that good, Harold. What a great popularity.”

“You really said like it was somebody else’s problem, huh~ ... it’s not a laughing matter. Even if everyone persistently trying to delve into that matter, I was doing my best to keep you guys’ involvement a secret!

That’s why I had to tell any number of strange lies.”

After sighing, Harold kept on talking.

He had said such things like, *‘A person who came down from the sky helped me’.*

‘Someone with a strangely high inhibition value happened to pass by, so I asked them to wave the wand’, he had said.

‘That person hid their face, so I don’t know anything else’, he had said.

He seemed to reveal only fragments, intending to mix the features of me, Auguste, and Tirnanog on purpose.

By the way, it seemed that every servant present of Nibelheim had been forbidden to say anything of that matter.

In regards to Gilbert who was even more aware of what truly happened, he had apparently been silenced with a severity that could be mistaken for actual threats.

Well, weren’t tight-lipped friends something wonderful. ³

“Because of that, do you know how strange rumors have spread?”

“No, this is my first time hearing that.”

“Heeh, what kind of rumors?”

It seemed that Harold’s story had spread around in an unexpected direction.

Because, in the past few days, there were sightings of mysterious people in Knot Reed.

It was said that a beautiful blonde young man leaped away in the sky above Knot Reed’s church.

It was said that at the ruins near Nibelheim, a figure of a beautiful silver-haired girl with aureola appeared, and she suddenly disappeared when one took their eyes off of her for a moment.

There seemed to be many other witnesses.

These series of mysterious people were rumored to be angels who had descended on Knot Reed.

Looking at my feet, Tirnanog was at Palug’s side making angry gestures.

Palug was silent and turned her face away unnaturally.

This rumor, no matter how I thought about it, was about Palug.

Perhaps, during her investigation, she jumped lightly in the form of Severe King Jean, or she substituted her aureola as light source in the form of Founder King Guillaume.

“Then, my testimony and the rumors of that angel or saint were strangely mixed.

‘Maybe that angel saved this city’, it has become such an outrageous story!

There were also eyewitness testimonies of a high-ranking alchemist and a mage, which is awkward, so we have a strange authenticity!”

It was the completion of the urban legend of the angels of Knot Reed.

It would be unlikely to discern the truth due to the conflicting testimonies, so this situation was a good thing.

I would use this to my advantage as much as I could.

“I appreciate it, Harold. I don’t want to be involved in troublesome matters more than this.”

“It’s the same for me, if it is known that I acted irresponsibly, my old scandals will be brought up again~.”

“Right~, for us who have bad behavior, continuing to pretend to be well-mannered is a must.”

“Exactly, it is said that bloomed flowers are plucked first after all¹. We have to live unassumingly.”

“We don’t want to stand out badly, you see~.”

Harold writhed in frustration while I was playing things off idly with Auguste.

“T-this delinquent prince and wicked woman...”

Harold murmured in a very faint voice.

We didn’t know who might be listening, so you shouldn’t curse at His Highness the Crown Prince and the duke’s daughter.

Aah, poor Harold.

However, for an unfortunate soul who had been put through hardships by us, Harold’s expression was very lively.

Speaking of which, the circumstances surrounding him were improving, huh.

“But I’m glad. If they acknowledge this case, you will be getting an open recommendation for the path of wand-making, right?”

Harold answered my words with a wide smile.

“Yeah, I got permission from Tou-san to enter Lindis, and while at it, I decided to skip a grade and also go to a local school.”

“Eh, you are still eight years old, right?”

“Since the contents taught by the private tutor are almost finished, I would like to master metallurgical relation first.

While I am here, I want to master what I can learn only here.”

“Heeh~, skipping a grade, huh, how amazing.”

Auguste was also impressed by Harold’s words.

While we were talking with each other like this, there was a commotion from the direction of the hall.

In the center of the commotion were Earl Nibelheim, Viscount Turm, Gilbert, and then Turm elder.

The prototypes of the porcelain were arranged on the table, and Gilbert was talking fluently with elegance.

And sometimes Earl Nibelheim and Turm elder added supplementary explanation.

“Ooh~, Aniki and the others seem to have started.”

“Gilbert-san seems to be good at that sort of thing, huh.”

First of all, the color of the eyes of the aristocrats who perhaps had deep knowledge of arts became peculiar.

Porcelain was one of the most valuable items next to gold.

Even in terms of the degree of perfection and peculiarity, Gilbert’s porcelain should be spectacular.

The enthusiasms of the nobles who understood the value at a glance were transmitted to their surroundings.

All three of Gilbert’s supporters were solid and trustworthy people.

Even those who didn't know the authenticity could understand that these porcelains were valuable.

To the beauty of porcelain, people were dazzled, and enthusiasm was born.

Gilbert's words excited people, stirred their desire, and spread wild enthusiasm.

Wild enthusiasm generated money.

If the wild enthusiasm spread, they wouldn't lack business partners.

Creditors would surely wait until the tree that bears money bore fruits².

I saw that Gilbert smiled with his father the Turm elder and his older brother Viscount Turm.

He was able to return to where he should return.

"If it continues like this, there is no doubt that it will be a huge success. Let's celebrate it."

"Well then, we should toast first. To the future of the young genius?"

"Your Highness Auguste, please don't do that~~."

"Hahaha, then, to the prosperity of the Nibelheim family and Knot Reed!"

Auguste smiled and held up his glass.

Harold was on the verge of tears while smiling faintly.

"Cheers!"

"Cheers."

The hustle and bustle of Knot Reed didn't abate even when the night was getting late, the people seemed very happy.

Before I knew it, I realized I was laughing.

Infected by the atmosphere of the people who were full of laughter, I felt like I could join the lively banquet at last.

In this way, my adventure over the third death flag had curtailed down for the moment.

For the moment.

I feel like it needs emphasize.

So, Ernst didn't know of Erica's involvement because he had to do the post-processing of the disaster and was too tired to check on Erica's room. While Glam Sight can show the name of the performer if it's Hafan's magic, apparently it can only show the name of the wandmaker if it was magic that came from a wand. And the servants were threatened into silence.

¹ Bloomed flowers are plucked first: those who stand out will attract attention.

² Meaning the creditors will wait until Nibelheim family gains enough money before they start asking their money back.

xtostos:

³ It was likely Tirnanog who convinced Gilbert (and possibly the servants) to keep quiet.

Chapter 89

Altar of Vampires

St. Winifred Great Church on the outskirts of Knot Reed.

It was the terminal point of the main twelve pilgrimage areas in the vicinity and was the oldest and only God's church in Knot Reed.

In the basement of the cathedral where it had been renovated many times, there were remains of the era where Ignitia's teachings were conveyed to this place for the first time.

The two phantom beasts and I were in the deepest part of the second basement of St. Winifred Great Church.

After the banquet, we secretly went out of Water Palace and came to this place.

There was a faint sound of water coming from behind the wall.

Perhaps there was a groundwater flowing somewhere.

The cave was cut out of limestone.

At the height of a standing adult, the ceiling drew a round arch.

In the back of the cave, there was a square marble altar engraved with a relief of the Sun and the angels.

Next to me were Palug who had dressed up as a man and the plush toy-size Tirnanog. The altar, illuminated by the torch that Tirnanog had, seemed to be an ordinary common altar for Ignitia's rituals.

Dropping the large jute bag she was carrying on her back, Palug opened her mouth.

"I'm sorry for bringing you here."

"Don't mind it. We are equal status in this regard."

[I have to confirm that you are not just playing around.]

Since you have brought us along, were there some good results?]

“Good results... if I can choose, it would be better if I didn’t find any result at all.”

[Hm? Do not use weird phrases.

Didn’t you invite us here because you wanted to show us something?]

When Tirnanog pointed it out, Palug smiled while narrowing her eyes.

It was a ferocious smile.

“Unfortunately, there is nothing here, or rather there is only something I don’t want to be exposed to anyone’s eyes if possible.”

[Fumu, in other words, our purpose is to check the existence of things that should not exist.]

“Correct. Although if possible, I want it to only be me thinking too much.”

Palug glanced at the altar.

And yet, it was a mediocre and ordinary altar.

“Is it impossible to check it alone, or is it dangerous?”

“If it really exists, neither you nor myself should touch it.

However, if we really have to check it... don’t you Aurelia have a convenient technology?”

Saying so, Palug pointed to the sandbag that had been transported by Tirnanog.

I see. She was thinking of making a golem to act on our behalf for the dangerous matters, huh.

Tirnanog opened the sandbag, poured the soil onto the floor, and roughly shaped it into the shape of a person.

I took out the athame knife and carved magical letters from the 72 letters on the core to be incorporated into the golem.

Unlike the standing-upright golems made at the testing field, this golem also incorporated proper motion control.

As I breathed in magical power into the golem, the headless humanoid earth golem stood up.

Since it could only act in a sluggish manner as it was now, I threw one portion of the torch into the hollow part of his torso as the power source.

While the torch was burning, the golem would become somewhat agile and it would be possible for it to do physical work.

“Is this sufficient?”

“Yes, it’s more than sufficient. From here, please move in accordance with my instructions.”

When Palug nodded in satisfaction, she took out several items from her jute bag.

An old golden candlestick branched into seven.

Seven candles made of beeswax.

Silver handbell with leather belt handle attached.

And, a tattered codex with several sheets of bookmark put between the pages.

“Thou, who will step into the Realm of Death, take heed.

The threshold of the impure has already opened before thee.

First, burn the seven-branched light and illuminate the unseeable darkness.”

On the ground underneath us, Palug’s poetry reverberated.

I ordered the golem and let it set the candles on the candlestick and lit them on fire.

At Palug’s cue, Tirnanog extinguished the fire of the torch by smothering it.

The seven flames of the candles projected the ominously swaying shadow of the headless golem on the ceiling.

“Second, ring the silver bell and call out to the Other Side.”

The golem picked up the handbell and shook it several times.

The sound that should be refreshing resounded coldly.

Before I knew it, I couldn’t hear the water sound that I heard from the other side of the wall.

Feeling as if the temperature of the room which had been cool by nature cooled down further, I hugged my own body.

“Third, praise Him and shout words of profanity.

Beware, thou will not return under the sunshine.

—You are already in the Realm of Death.”

The golem picked up the codex.

At the same time, Palug moved us several steps back.

The moment when the page marked by a bookmark was opened, some creaking sounds resounded from the golem’s chest.

The part where the clavicles should be in human beings was torn apart horizontally, and it became a mouth-like figure.

From the opening of the golem that shouldn’t have any vocal organ, a low voice that resembled the voice of a toad leaked and shook the air.

[N-now—, I respectfully offer You my salutations... ooh, Lord of Fresh Blood...

You who are the Master of the Mausoleum, of the Night and Darkness—.

I will come to Your side—for this soul is pure—.

These are Your hands on my back, and in Yours lies my fate.

Ooh, I wish, bestow on me my own mouth to speak—]

The golem was already breathing by itself, moving away from my control by itself.

Mutated into an unknown monster, what was once a golem knelt towards the altar.

A change also occurred to the altar.

As if seeping out of empty space, drop by drop, blood was stuck to the marble surface.

It seemed as if an invisible offering on the altar was being chopped up.

[I, who I am diminutive here and now, respectfully offer You my salutations.

The Exalted God of Corruption, You who dwells eternally inside the Tombs of the Land of Dusk.

The One who rides a boat of Skin and Flesh and passes time perpetual, the One who takes on Many Kinds and Many Forms.

Ooh, King of lands vast and clad in dark night, You who is magnificent, Your Name is—]

Before I knew it, the golem was speaking fluently just like a human being.

The lump of soil around the golem's core was bulging and wriggling towards the core, trying to capture it.

Just before the characters of *emet* engraved on the core was captured by the mutated lump of soil, Palug swung a glowing nail.

The golem whose characters engraved turned into *met*, turned back into a lump of earth once again.

[Mu...!?!]

"This is... just what exactly..."

"Wait. It's not over yet."

Palug took us by hand.

As she said, even after the golem, the performer of the ritual, was destroyed, the changes of the altar continued.

I wondered how many times the sacrificial knife was swung down.

The blood of the invisible offering wet the altar.

There was a trace of blood continuing down from the altar to the floor, as if something soaked in blood had fallen down.

Flopping down, I looked at the traces on the floor and shuddered.

No matter how I looked at it, it looked like a human handprint.

An unseen knife cut off the life of a person and their handprints were erased by the newly flowing blood.

Then the blood of several more people was shed, when the altar was completely covered with fresh blood, the phantom halted.

The inside of the narrow basement was filled with the smell of blood to a choking extend.

[Twelve people... huh.]

“The number of altars is also twelve. One person was killed per altar.

Unfortunately, it seems that my conjecture is right.

In addition, it’s the worst among the worst conjectures.”

Palug had a smile on her face that made her seem about to bite at the unseen killer.

With that expression alone, I could see that she held a considerable anger in her chest.

“No way, for what purpose did they kill 12 people?”

“They wanted to rewrite the altar’s ceremonies and authorities.

This was a dedicated offering to a different God, this altar is not the altar of my God anymore.

The other eleven altars connected to this altar should have also been rewritten completely.”

[By doing that, they were snatching your and the other angels’ power.

Fumu. Having done that, it means the power of the faith that is currently being scattered to the sea is a diversion, huh.]

“Yes, thanks to that, I was late in realizing this.

It seems that this someone didn’t want to be found out by us.”

Tirnanog was throwing glances at Palug’s way.

Speaking of which, she was depleted of power until she almost died because of this.

There was a sound of him clenching his fangs anxiously from underneath his face armor.

He was also thinking about the circumstances of his quarreling friend.

[I do not know who it was, but they have a bad hobby.

Secretly sucking up the lives of other people, even if it was discovered, it would still give a serious wound to the other party.

If one had exposed this secret unprepared, one might have been corroded and taken in by it.]

“Yes, that was their... the vampires’ way.”

Vampires.

Just hearing that word, I felt chills running through my spine.

Information on the worst bad end of the original game came to my mind.

A mountain of dead bodies covered the ground, exchanging kisses smeared with blood on top of it.

With the same name as the last King of Casketia, the hidden character called Cain.

[Was it a survivor of the destroyed ancient Kingdom, or was it a religious fanatic enthralled by the power and knowledge of the vampires?]

“Even if it was a religious fanatic, if they have the power and wisdom derived from the vampires, I couldn’t leave them as is.”

Palug cut off her words for a moment and looked at me.

Her eyes held a firm resolution.

“Erica, please give me time to move freely.

It’s fine even if it’s just inbetween helping out with your oracles.

Even if I am the only surviving angel, this is the only enemy that must be destroyed.”

I held Palug’s gaze and shook my head quietly.

Her eyes shook a little in unrest.

“That’s right. I am not an angel anymore; I am your subordinate.

I have attracted unnecessary crisis with my selfish behaviors—”

“That’s not it, just you alone are not enough, right? You will need plenty of help and supplies.”

Hearing my answer, Palug was dumbfounded for a while.

Tirnanog’s laughter echoed within the silent underground altar.

[Kukukukuku, interesting. That's the friend I know.]

"See, even Tir is agreeing to this, so for the time being how about we start with the three of us."

"Y-you guys... jeez, just how much of good-natured people are you~~!"

Palug cried out with somewhat teary eyes.

She was so happy that she couldn't help saying the opposite words.

I thought so when I saw her lion-tail jutted out and swaying lightly.

To tell the truth, I was angry with this culprit.

How difficult and miraculous did they think it was to be alive.

Whether it was people or beasts, they were earnestly standing on the place where they belong, it was unreasonable to take away their lives easily.

Even more so since this was not natural selection or natural disaster, but clear animosity and malice.

"I need to prepare. Even if every vampire of Casketia revives, we only need to destroy them a second time."

With a glimpse of the biggest death flag appeared in front of me, I spoke so in determination.

It could be said that my challenge was reckless.

On the other hand, Tirnanog had an expression like he was admiring a bright student, and Palug was nodding with an expression of renewed resolution.

Chapter 90

Harold Nibelheim's Letter

Long time no see, how are you?

This place is doing great.

Everything is smooth sailing.

At the workshop, we are also working on training craftsmen, and there are also prospects for mass production.

Before long, the pottery traders around us got an inkling of what we were making, and some of them were trying to imitate it.

And yet, nobody seems to be able to reach anything resembling the whetstone or cobalt oxide.

A decade worth of knowledge accumulation is not just for show.

Since stealing the technique or material is not that easy, we can feel relief for the moment.

Gilbert-aniki is taken along by his father/my Master to connect with various people.

The person himself is troubled, but as the business grows bigger, he cannot stay inside the workshop.

Oh yeah, I made a prototype of what you asked for, so I will enclose it with this letter.

I had a hard time with your unreasonable orders this time.

It goes without saying, but be careful in handling them.

Especially for the lens, if it's equipped by a person other than you, there is a risk of blindness, so you must not lend them to anyone.

I wonder if you can wait for the boots a little longer.

It takes time to arrange the materials, balance the spells, and so on.

It will take a couple more months until I have something to show you.

It's getting cold, so take care of your health.

If you catch a cold, I'll send you the unpleasant nutritional supplement from Sergei-ossan.

Well then, this report ends here.



Aurelia Ducal's Autumn Palace.

Three months had passed since the series of incidents occurred at Knot Reed.

A letter from Harold Nibelheim to Erica Aurelia had arrived.

This was the 20th letter in total.

The contents of those letters were ranging from status report, work progress situation, explanation of the enclosed magic tools, etc.

Every time there was some changes or a new discovery, letters were sent one by one.

Harold was a hard-working boy.

Several prototypes had arrived this time as well.

First of all, a porcelain tea set made at Gilbert's workshop.

And then, Harold's custom-made wand and magic tool.

Erica spread those items on the desk and checked each one.

First, the blue and white porcelain tea set with flowers drawn on it.

Erica traced the edge of the teacup with her fingertips.

The ideal thinness and smoothness.

A stunning design that harmonized traditional patterns with modern shapes.

Erica's lips curved up into a smile naturally.

In this way, they would surely be able to create a porcelain craze.

Next, she opened the small box with a wand in it.

The charged magic was Crystal Cluster.

Confirmed the label and stored the wand inside her wandholder at once.

On the center of the talc wand head was hawthorn, and the core material was kraken's soft shell bone.

It was an especially simple wand that was not decorated.

Harold gave the answer to her request 'an offensive wand which can be mass-produced at a relatively low price'.

She finally opened a small box.

Wrapped in cushioning material, there was a small glass bottle.

In the transparent liquid packed inside the bottle, a green round fragment was floating.

Tirnanog in his small golem state and Palug in her golden cat form peered in curiously.

[What is it?]

"It's a lens to be used by attaching it directly to the eyes instead of glasses."

[Hou, directly to the eyes?]

"Yes."

Erica was trying to reproduce the contact lenses of her previous life.

It was not necessary to correct visual acuity, it was for another use.

[It is quite a strange item. I also feel magical power from it.]

"Instead of charging it into a wand, the magic of demonic eye¹ is charged into the lens."

Erica asked Harold for a lens charged with demonic eye magic.

The charged magic was Glam Sight.

Building Glam Sight spell directly on the lens that was cut out from emerald was a difficult work.

However, Harold was a skillfull craftsman, even when it was difficult, he was able to finish it in just three months.

“Actually, I’d like to stock Urd Sight too, but it seems to be impossible.”

[It should be fine if you request for it. If it is that redheaded brat, he will be able to do it without difficulty.]

“That’s not it, there are mainly financial problems...”

Erica washed her hands and tried wearing the lens of Glam Sight on her left eye.

If she closed her eyelids mildly with the spell in mind, the magic circle would be deployed on her eyeball.

In the normal view, the outline of magical structure seemed to float so that it became a double image.

She felt a light dizziness, but Erica judged that it would be no problem for her.

“I have to report the results of using these two items.

I will try it at once. Be careful, you two.”

Took out the prototype wand from her wandholder, waved it while being cautious.

Along the path of the wand, a huge Crystal Cluster was created on the carpet.

She did the same thing while using Wand Alteration.

Harold seemed to have raised his skills in making wands, and it became possible for her to withdraw the spells without burden, a smooth magical silk-like thread was made.

Release the rebuilt magic towards the ceiling.

Small pieces of crystal fell from the magic circle deployed about two meters in radius like snow.

[Oh my, how beautiful.]

[No matter how I look at it, it’s an excellent wand.]

Crystal Cluster was a versatile magic.

She could use this instead of a barrier or a fortress, and shoot this instead of a spear or a cannonball.

A variety of usage methods could be considered if it was combined with the expansion effect.

In this case, it would be possible to penetrate vampires with this instead of using stakes.

Through the eyes, information on the creator of the wand was displayed.

Now there were only few information that could be analyzed with the lens of Glam Sight.

However, after six years, a more complete Glam Sight could probably be built on the lens.

“Both of these items can do more than I thought. As expected of Harold.”

She had also asked Harold for the creation of several kinds of magic tools.

They were all special items, but he would always answer to her expectations.

For Erica who needed immediate measures against vampires, Harold was a reassuring ally.

Erica went back to her desk and wrote a letter of appreciation to Harold.



Trade City Knot Reed.

Inside the Wunderkammer of Turm Wand Store, Harold spread a letter on his working desk.

That was the reply to the contact he sent to Aurelia last weekend.

Compliments and further requests for wands and lenses were meticulously written with neat handwriting.

The prototypes did better than his assumption, Harold grinned.

He tried to return to a serious face many times, but his mouth became loose without permission contrary to his will.

He was in good spirits.

“Ooh~, is that a letter from the princess? Haa~, what a neat handwriting.”

“Hiie-”

Harold was startled by the voice coming from behind him and pitched forward.

When he recovered his posture and turned around, standing there was Gilbert who seemed to be in high spirits.

Harold drew the letter from Erica into his bosom.

Gilbert looked at him who was in such state with a grin.

“Eeh~, why are you hiding it? I want to read it too.”

“No way, Aniki. This letter is for me!”

“Eh~... , but it’s the valuable connection with the princess of Aurelia.

As a person in charge of the porcelain business, I’d like to take care of such valuable person, but what about you?”

“Well, if you handle it in that manner...”

Erica, the daughter of Duke Aurelia, would probably be in an important position in the Federal Kingdom.

Despite her young age she was widely known, gorgeous and eye-catching, and so made for an excellent advertisement platform.

However, as for Harold, he didn’t want to involve Erica too much in business.

Although she was capable, she was too competent and it was difficult to repay back.

Right now, he had a debt of gratitude that he was unlikely able to return in his lifetime.

Without noticing Harold’s annoyance, Gilbert was smirking as if he was having fun.

“Hmm. As expected~. As a boy, you would like to protect the girl of your first love, right~.”

“Hah?! What are you talking about suddenly, Aniki!”

First love.

Harold turned bright red hearing Gilbert’s words which was thrown from the direction he never thought about.

However, his response made Gilbert further misunderstood.

“Right, right, I wanted to see a reaction like that!”

“What do you mean by that.”

“Something like this, you want to keep her away from the dirty nature of the world like gold or connection, and you want to cherish her, right?”

“That’s not it. Erica and I are... how do I say it, we are not like that!”

“Eh~, is that so?”

“What is it, Aniki. You’re staring.”

Gilbert felt a certain air as if Harold was fed up with him from his attitude.

Being glared at, Gilbert gave in quickly.

Correcting his posture, made a serious look and sat opposite of him.

He just wanted to play with the young people, he didn’t want fight.

“I’m sorry. I went too far.”

“Aniki, why do you have such a wild idea like a smelly old man?”

“Smelly old man...”

Hearing Harold’s casual phrase, Gilbert suffered deep damage.

Recovering his spirit, Gilbert replied.

“It’s like this, I am your older brother.

I want to give love advice to Botchan who is disheartened because the princess of your first love already has a prince.”

“Eh, I don’t understand what you mean at all.”

“See, you have a fleeting first love on Erica-jou who you had fatefully encountered,

right?”

“Eeh—”

In Harold’s mind, for some reason, the high grade aristocratic features of Erica rose to the surface.

The seemingly quiet girl, when in fact she was nonchalantly aggressive, was like a hammer or a vise if he compared her to a tool.

It was a hard and difficult choice as a first love partner.

Harold’s cheeks twitched, if he liked someone like that, he would live a hard life.

“But next to the princess there is the perfect His Highness Auguste, isn’t there?

It’s regrettable, but he’s a good match for her. Aah, it’s painful when first love doesn’t come true, isn’t it?”

“Haa.”

Auguste with a carefree smile, who was beautiful like a girl, came to his mind.

The royalty’s bad habit of being defenseless thoughtlessly and his innocent speech and conduct, made him feel disconcerted.

However, if one peeled off the angel-like surface, one would see a devil lurking underneath it, Harold had witnessed a glimpse of such a thing.

What absolute perfection, Harold thought.

“If it’s His Highness Auguste and Erica-ojousama, aren’t they a couple that suits each other?”

“Ah—, sure, they do suit each other.”

Both of them had fake-looking, lovely outward appearance.

When they dressed up and lined side-by-side, they painted a beautiful picture.

Harold trembled with fear that they were also well-match in a certain meaning internally and, if possible, he didn’t want to get close.

“Such painful and bittersweet things are unacceptable.”

“Is this still about your wild idea?”

“Yeah.”

“What a shame, Aniki. Your conjecture is utterly wrong.”

Gilbert hung his head dejectedly.

“Ah–, well, that’s right. I’m sorry for making fun of you, Botchan.”

“...I mean, Aniki is different from usual. Rather, aren’t you in high spirits?”

“Eh, I’m always like this though.”

When Harold pointed it out, Gilbert avoided meeting his eyes directly.

Aah, as expected there is something, Harold became suspicious.

“Hm?”

Suddenly, Harold realized that there was a sweet fragrance different from usual.

“This is weird. Is Aniki wearing perfume?”

“Uh, no, this is... nowadays I meet many big shots, so I groom myself.

Since I’m staying over at the workshop, the days I couldn’t return home continue.”

“On the contrary, your shirt is clean.”

“Uuh, well, I have many similar shirts.”

“But it’s crisp from ironing. Then, Aniki... you got a girlfriend?”

“Wait–!? You...!?”

Harold concentrated his consciousness on Gilbert’s perfume.

This was a fragrant he had recently smelled.

“Southern flowers, rose, bergamot, lime, and a little cloves... this is the new perfume of the store at Barker Street.”

“Uuh, how did you know it!?”

The perfume store handles mainly perfume for women, but this new product was a rare one for men.

There was only one woman of age in that store.

The perfumer Bell.

A woman with bright green eyes with craftsman temperament, who had her long red hair in braids.

“Your girlfriend is the perfumer Bell-anechan? Speaking of which, Ane-chan has been in high spirits these days.

Her new product is being given a somewhat embarrassing name like [Sweet Melody of Lovers], which is unlike her.”

“Geh, she gave it a name like that!?”

“I see—, Aniki and Ane-chan are childhood friends?”

“W-why do you—”

“Because you guys are the same age.”

“O-ou... you got me... I can’t hide anything from Botchan, huh.”

Gilbert, who was being toyed by Harold, learned the feeling of impatience while he was standing on the side of the one who was being toyed.

“Bell-anechan, when I think about it, she doesn’t have any male presence near her, so she has been waiting for Aniki for ten years, huh.

And, Aniki’s business also got on track, turning down major companies—”

“See, see you later, Botchan. I’ll end it here.

Do your best and don’t push yourself too hard!”

Gilbert left the room to escape from the awkwardness, cutting off Harold’s words with a loud voice.

Only the sweet fragrance of his perfume was left in the Wunderkammer.

“Good grief, that Aniki... love or anything like that is something that I cannot afford.”

Harold sighed lightly.

Right now he was having fun with assembling wands and learning.

Falling in love and the like would add too much to his plate, so it should be enough if he did it in ten years or so, he thought.

Moreover, it wasn't likely for him to see Erica as a romance subject for the moment.

For Harold, Erica was his benefactor.

At that time, if there was no Erica.

If Auguste had not come looking for Erica.

That was why he had a lifetime gratitude for her.

Of course Harold was also indebted to Auguste, but in any case, to him who was to become King it would suffice to act in support of general national interests in return.

"Now then... I wonder if there will be any progress today."

Harold sat on the chair and started working on a prototype for Erica.

Many of her proposals were interesting.

It was a fun task that Harold could also satisfy his intellectual curiosity.

A wand charged with effective magic at a low price, he came up with ideas gradually and sent the prototypes one by one.

The prototype of the lens charged with demonic eye at last completed just a few days ago.

The current challenge was boots with magic.

"But, I wonder what they are used for."

Harold didn't hear about the details in the end.

He had postponed asking about it, thinking it would be better if she told him about it herself when she wanted to, when it would be easier for her.

However, what he did know was that there were only deadly dangerous and hard to

comprehend circumstances surrounding her.

Harold wanted to be a man who could save her if Erica fell into desperate circumstances.

Like how he was saved by her when he fell into despair.

If a predicament where Erica alone couldn't do anything came up, he thought that was the time for him to help Erica.

Once he had done that, he could finally be her equal in the real sense.

“Oh well. I need but move my hands for the demanding you.”

Harold stopped worrying and started working.

‘If you have time to be worried, move your hands even just a little’, that was his creed.

¹ Demonic eye magic referred to the visual system magic, like Glam Sight, Urd Sight, and Raptor Sight.

Chapter 91

Reeds Thrive in Hell

The Lunatic King, or Priest King Cain Grendel.

The last King of Casketia.

A mysterious character whose origins was unknown.

The name of Cain appeared for the first time in the history of Casketia a hundred years after its foundation.

It was said that Cain had settled a completely new dominance system that overturned the ruling system of the national unit until then.

After the destruction of the Romulus Empire, several ethnic groups based in Northeast Karkinos had signed an alliance.

With this national alliance, the four former imperial provinces were unified, and Casketia was established.

It was the Chief of Wesir tribe who supervised the ritual, who was first enthroned.

(Hereinafter referred to as Wesir Dynasty)

In Wesir tribe, the word Aaru means King.

From the ancient word in the northeastern part of Karkinos which means 'reeds thrive in Hell'.

About fifty years after the foundation passed, a rebellion caused by Setekh tribe who held the military occurred.

The ritual system by Wesir tribe collapsed, and a policy change was made to the new religion of the faith of the highest existence.

(Hereinafter referred to as Setekh Dynasty)

Setekh tribe, who held control, massacred Wesir tribe.

Everyone who had the blood of the Wesir Dynasty was caught and enslaved as a

zombie.

(To discover the name list as a shelf: Found in 5963.

Since only the number is recorded, do we need documentation for comparison in the follow-up investigation?)

Around 100 years after the foundation, 50 years after the establishment of the Setekh Dynasty.

At that time, Setekh tribe elected Cain Grendel and handed over the kingship.

There was no material on Cain before this.

Why was an unknown person suddenly elected to be the King?

In the document reflecting the situation of the late Setekh Dynasty, the concern about the highest existence was stated.

[※ There are ten copies of documents concerning the natural disasters occurred in the areas controlled by Casketia at that time]

Wasn't Cain a survivor of Wesir Dynasty?

[Precisely speaking, he was an undead of the Wesir tribe who was *revived*, rather than *survived*.]

[※ Scribbles with different handwriting here only]

The crest of the Priest King Cain was the cross, as was well-known.

This was the emblem of Wesir Dynasty, it could be thought that it cut out the part corresponding to 'neck' from the design representing *ankh*¹.

It was similar to shaving a character from *emet* engraved on golem and turning it into *met*.

It was also based on the fact that all the altars of the highest existence had been destroyed since Cain enthroned.

Since the appearance of Cain, Casketia's enslavement technique had a revolutionary progress.

The existence made by this technique was called a ghoul and [corresponding portion blackened]

(Or, was it a sample of the technique that made vampires?)

Cain carried out the ghoulification treatment on the ruling classes of the Setekh Dynasty.

To familiarize the ghouls that needed huge amount of flesh and blood, he domesticated the ruling classes who had not been getting the treatment.

It was said that Casketia went into tyranny towards its vassal nations to maintain the group of ghouls.

When thinking that Cain Grendel was the Wesir tribe, many consistent things matched. For example, his paradoxical aggression towards the Setekh tribe, when the poor treatment of the Wesir tribe was taken into consideration—



Midwinter, Magic Academy City Lindis.

First Prince of Ignitia, Auguste was laying on a chaise lounge set in a dormitory's room. Around the chaise lounge there were several books to read.

“Nn... it's this time already, huh.”

Before he knew it the sun had already set, and the inside of the room was wrapped in darkness.

Auguste lit the fire of the candle stub that was still inserted in the candlestick. It got a little brighter, but he still couldn't rely on it to read.

“There should be a lamp, but I wonder where is it.”

Auguste illuminated around the corner of the room with the candlestick.

The room was equipped with bookshelves and document shelves on almost every wall except for the windows and doors.

The bookshelves were filled with books carefully, and dubious items were categorized and classified on the document shelves in a scrupulous manner.

A number of boxes were stacked on the floor, and among them were packed books that didn't fit in the bookshelf.

It was a collection of books that could be said as much as a small library.

The owner of this room was a person that in the school dormitory rumored to be a strange person with heretic ideology.

The moment Auguste saw the inside of the room at first sight, he thought that such rumors had some basis.

In the bookshelves, the most advanced magic books and primitive sorcery monographs were arranged in a casual manner.

The books written about heresy / paganism were countless.

In the back of the room were a heavy construction desk and a rotating chair with an armrest and a large backrest.

On the desk were the rituals for divine ceremony which the Federal Kingdom did not believe in.

A silver handbell and a golden candlestick separated into seven branches.

An old fashioned codex with a lot of bookmarks pinched between the pages.

When he turned over to the page where the bookmark was sandwiched, he could see unsettling description such as 'offer the hearts of twelve people'.

A big living creature fluttered from outside the window, and Auguste turned around.

A black dragon with a familiar silhouette was standing on the window side against the moonlight.

"Have you satisfied your curiosity, Auguste?"

"Unfortunately the next curiosity comes whenever one is satisfied.

It looks like I will be borrowing this room a little bit longer, Professor."

The black dragon instructed him to put the candlestick down with a gesture.

Auguste followed his instruction and placed the candlestick on the desk.

The black dragon gently stared at the mountain of books piled up around the chaise longue.

“Forbidden magic, and vampire materials... they are all about heretics.

You are likely to be rumored as heretical, are you not afraid of the rumors anymore?”

“I don’t want to be told that by someone who gathered the heretical materials.”

Auguste had something he wanted to know.

His cousin Louis, whose rumors that he was fascinated by vampires and went mad and such things were spreading.

The ancient curse set on the Chalice of his own dragons.

Both were the problems that had frustrated him for a long time.

And because it was said that they were already settled, there was nothing he could do.

So, he wanted to know even a little bit.

There was only one person in charge of the investigation of the curse put on the Chalice, so Professor was profoundly knowledgeable about this technique.

In his library, there were also an abundance of materials on Karkinos’ sorcery which was difficult to obtain in Ichthyes.

In addition to taking private lessons in Theurge, he decided to read materials related to sorcery and vampires when he had time.

“Of all things, you read the supposition about Aaru, huh. This is troubling.

Even though that material was prohibited because of heresy.”

“If you don’t want me to read such things, don’t put them where I can reach.”

“The box containing Aaru supposition should have been locked.”

“Aah, you mean this key?”

You should hide it in a more difficult place to find next time, Professor.”

Auguste threw the small key taken out of his pocket to the black dragon.

The black dragon gazed at the key he received and furrowed his brows.

“Good grief. The forbidden books you read so far are certainly fascinating.”

“Aa. They are very interesting materials. But, there are a couple of things I don’t understand.”

“The second draft of Aaru supposition is a draft of a paper written by an immature student.

There are also many leaps in logic, unexplained things, since there is also a lack of information on the primary source of quotation.

I will give you additional information as much as I could. What didn’t you understand?”

“Let’s see... first off, I want you to tell me more about zombies.”

Auguste sat down again on the chaise longue and flipped through the pages of the Aaru supposition and the gathered materials.

The black dragon laid on the foot of the rotating chair and took a relaxed posture.

“Did you know that zombification is a southern-oriented sorcery that enslaved a corpse?”

“Aa, I wonder if that was the origin of the former Island of Messenger’s name, Island of Dead People.”

“That is correct. The Island of Messenger was a place flourishing as a relay point for the zombie trade.”

Romulus Empire who created the foundation of enslavement sorcery.

Casketia who consumed lots of slaves due to the undeads.

Gigantia who drove in sorcerous metals and machined slaves.

The southern continent had long been dominated by a culture that prefers slaves.

“What had become the foundation was a type of apparent death treatment that has been done since ancient times in Northeast Karkinos.

It creates slaves through internal cranial manipulation by surgical techniques, anesthesia by drug administration, and hypnosis.

It was later intersected with Romulus’ sorcery, and became a spell that overcomes the boundary between human life and death.”

“It’s a technique to make an undead that can be used as a magical slave, huh.”

“That is correct. It is said that the source of the man-made undeads is Casketia’s zombies.

The spell allows the dead body that has been subjected to preservation treatment as a vessel some degree of autonomous behavior by incorporating a bound soul into it.”

“Even death is not a salvation for the soul, huh... what a terrible story.”

In Ignitia’s teaching, they preached that the soul was eternal.

Under God, sin was forgiven, shackles were broken, glory and rest were given.

It was different from zombies that had been constrained with immortality who had to continue the blasphemy for eternity.

In Aurelia, the soul was thought to drift.

Self as a person was washed away and was reborn into a new life.

It was different from zombies who was deprived of their free will and was made to be resuscitated as a corrupted existence.

In Hafan and Lucanrant too, even if the form was different, death was a salvation.

“For the zombie’s master, it doesn’t matter whether the soul of the slave was saved or not.

Just as we do not mind whether livestock’s soul has salvation or not.

It is convenience and rationality that emphasized those who use slaves.

Zombie which doesn't get old, doesn't fall ill, doesn't complain, and doesn't go against them can be said to be an ideal slave."

"What a bad taste, Professor."

Professor talked about the inhumane conduct of slavery in a pleasant way.

As if he himself was thinking so.

Auguste showed disgust towards Professor's attitude, but he squashed the feeling in a single stroke.

However, just by the atmosphere, Professor seemed to be enjoying his reaction itself.

"Then, what are ghouls? Is it a different thing from zombie?"

"Ghoul is an immortal slave for combat with active thinking abilities.

If zombie is a faithful servant, ghoul is a faithful warrior.

However, unlike a zombie whose purpose is as a long-time slave, a ghoul is premised on being disposable."

"They are for battle but disposable?"

"It is hard as it is to give highly thinking abilities to the corpses.

High intelligence that enables battle and the command of the zombies group exhausts the bound soul to strain.

The only way to maintain the wear and tear of ghouls is to prey others' lives.

Human blood in particular is the most effective... rather than saying that other foods have almost no meaning."

Eventually they returned to the bad taste topic, Auguste was disgusted.

However, he thought that it was not necessary to bother entertaining Professor, and on the surface he kept up an indifferent reaction.

"That is... well, I guess they are just like vampires, huh."

“No. In the case of ghouls, they merely imitate the predation mechanism of the soul of a monster and the likes.

Predatory ability of a vampire has higher order characteristics. No, it's no longer a different thing.

—Vampires are their own kind of Hell.”

Hearing the word ‘Hell’, Auguste recalled the material he had read a while ago.

“Don’t speak in a roundabout way.

It was also written in the document, but Hell... about the Aaru part, ultimately, just what exactly do you want to say?”

“If you can’t talk about it until the end, you shouldn’t talk about it at all.

The act of spreading that information recklessly brings confusion to the nation.

However, as it exists in this world, there are only a limited number of people who knows about it.”

Cutting off his words for a moment, the black dragon closed his eyes and strained his ears.

Auguste also spread his mental interference skills to their surroundings and confirmed that no human beings were lurking around.

“The vampires held the blood and soul of a predator inside themselves.

By regenerating these flesh and blood and soul, a vampire can *wear* the figure and personality of another person.

Also, those who gained higher power will regenerate those people as a self-sufficient underling.”

Professor lowered his voice until it was only a whisper.

Auguste was able to interpret the meaning with his own head.

Vampires could turn into human beings.

For what purpose?

It didn't need to be said. To hide, and to deceive.

"I see. Human beings around us may actually be vampires.

If so, scepticism, anxiety, and fear would spread among the people."

"That's correct."

"Professor. Then, if we spread the right way of identifying the vampires at the same time..."

Auguste spoke, and then cut off his words.

That kind of thing should be obvious.

If one didn't do what one normally would do, there was only a limited reason for that.

"No way, we cannot distinguish between human beings and vampires?"

Professor showed his fangs and laughed.

"Auguste, you are truly an excellent student, I would like the other students to be more like you.

It is as you said. We have not established a method to reliably identify latent vampires yet."

"Not even magic or demonic eye or the mental touch using the power of a Theurge?"

"It is impossible in any of the ways you mentioned or in ways not mentioned by you.

By any means, latent vampires are recognized as humans.

Even the person being wore is not aware that he is already dead.

Until the moment when that person tears a pitiful victim apart and tries to eat them."

Auguste felt chills ran through his spine as he committed the information to his memory.

Indeed, if this was publicly known, there would be panic in the continent.

“The number of humans that Lunatic King Cain took as his body is said to be several thousand and hundreds of millions.

Don’t you think he’s like a Hell personified, roaming the world?”

“Hell, huh... it’s like a sad one-man play to me.”

“A sad one-man play, huh. What an interesting view.”

Kuku, laughing sounds came from his throat as if Professor found it amusing.

“My bad taste acquaintance had said similar things.

I guess the man named Cain was very lonely.”

“If he was lonely, why was he trying to become a Hell?”

“He resembled a child who collects dolls.

It is theorized that he wasn’t able to endure loneliness, so even a corpse was caught by him.

Well, I think that is extremely far-fetched and sentimental.”

Auguste thought about the lonely Lunatic King who reigned on this continent.

Did he really feel lonely since he collected corpse like dolls?

Perhaps, that was the beginning of the real loneliness instead.

Auguste thought that he wouldn’t be able to bear such loneliness if he was in the same position as the Lunatic King.

On the day of the Advent Festival, he had peeped at the other side of the boundary for a moment.

He felt glad that he could come back from there.

The girl who found himself inside the coffin suddenly came to Auguste’s mind.

“Well, Auguste. Is the explanation sufficient?”

“Aa, for the time being, I understand why this Aaru supposition is prohibited. This might be the source of rumors that vampires may still exist.”

“That is correct. If you understand, it will be nice if you return it to its place properly.”

“Oops, I wonder what should I do...”

Auguste said so in a joking tone of voice, then pondered about it for a moment.

Touching on heretical things had a pleasant allure to it.

If one touched on it too much, one was likely to step into a world where one couldn't go back.

In the gap between logic and curiosity, Auguste wavered.

Auguste traced the signature on the cover of the draft with a finger and a smile formed on his lips.

“Professor, how about with exchange condition. I want to talk to the person who made this material.”

“The older brother of Bort of the Evil Eye, Oswald Bort. You want to see him?”

“Aa. Is it useless?”

“That's an unreasonable request. Unfortunately, he died a long time ago.”

When he heard the answer, Auguste was a little disappointed.

But at the same time, he felt like it was natural.

The subject he chose for his research was beyond reckless.

“I see. Well, there is no choice. A different condition...”

“I can predict what you want.

Is it another paper written by Oswald Bort, or his death certificate?

Both had been taken out to be submitted as a report.”

The voice sounded from the back of the room cut off Auguste's words.

Unexpectedly, the candlestick candle placed on the desk burned out and disappeared. There, a Theurge was sitting in a way so that he sank into his chair relaxedly.

The black dragon who was released from control closed his eyes and fell asleep on the carpet.

In exchange, the Theurge slowly opened his eyes as if waking up from a light sleep. In the darkness, reddish purple eyes looked at Auguste.

"Oh, welcome home, Professor. Where are you going this time?"

"There is no need for you to know. So, what about the transaction?"

Professor took out several envelopes from his desk drawers.

His expression was wrapped in darkness, and it couldn't be seen from Auguste's position.

"I want to know, and Professor wants to teach.

And if someone has to know, I have the qualification and duty for it.

Then, the answer is obvious, right?"

Auguste stood up from his chair and stepped into the dark.

Professor's reddish purple eyes which were sparkling in the moonlight, narrowed in satisfaction.

The history on the first part of this chapter is derived from Egyptian mythology, about Osiris and Set. Osiris' other name was Wesir, while Set's other name was Setekh. In the myth, Osiris was killed by Set who wanted the throne. His body then found by Isis (his sister & wife) and she hid it in the reeds. But then it was found by Set again and dismembered by him. Isis joined the dismembered pieces of Osiris, briefly brought him back to life and impregnated by him before he again died. Then Isis gave birth to Horus. (Osiris, Set)

Aaru is an Egyptian word. It means reeds. The Field of Aaru or the Field of Reeds is the heavenly paradise where souls will exist in pleasure for all eternity. (source) But

the word for 'afterlife/hell/heaven/underworld' is the same which is '冥府'. So that it makes sense, I use 'Hell' as the translation.

¹ Ankh: an ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic symbol that represents the word for 'life'. The sign has a cross shape but with an oval loop in place of an upper bar. (source)

And yes, there are two types of undead slaves of Casketia:

屍鬼 – Ghouls, and the technique of making this type will be called ghoulfication.

屍者 – Zombies, and the technique of making this type will be called zombification.

Even though they used the same kanji whether they were referring to the slave or the technique -,-

Chapter 92

Mysterious Story, "The Man Who Disappeared"

It was a dark night where the moon did not come out.

I guess it was after a long trip. I thought it was a terribly dirty man.

But, looking closely, the clothes themselves seemed awfully expensive.

They mismatched with the guy.

When we secretly put our heads together, there was a jingling sound of coins.

Of course, we turned around in surprise.

There was that guy who seemed like a shopkeeper. He counted a pile of gold coins with a face like a dying fish.

That guy told us with a sharp smile.

“Come on, everyone. Drink and eat as much as you want, it’s my treat.

Today, tomorrow, and the next day as well – as long as I stay here, it’s my treat.

Instead, promise me, if you go outside the bar, never tell anyone about me.

Of course, keep secret of this free drinks story from your scary wives too.”

We soon became friends.

Well, at first that guy’s wallet was my friend.

But well, his stories were funny. Before I knew it, we became real friends.

Before I knew it, his face felt like my childhood friend and he was blending in with my friends.

Oh, certainly, he said this:

“I am the continent’s biggest fraudster.

Concerning obtaining gold, no alchemist is my opponent.

It is my job to get secrets from aristocratic bees and merchant honeycombs without working for the sweet golden nectar.”

Well, that one was a horror though.

I never heard of him talking about cheating money from someone before.

In the first place, he didn’t need to rob money.

He was rich enough to surprise me.

Besides, he was generous and there was nothing I didn’t like about him.

Each and every night, I had a luxurious banquet with that guy.

Oh yeah, I had a good time.

Stupidly expensive wine of the South and East. The fragrant distilled liquor of the West. The strong alcohol that was likely to catch the throat on fire of the North.

Sturgeon eggs, fattened goose liver, white mushrooms, and the finest meat, meat, and meat.

Everyone was eating and drinking without reservations, but without a doubt, the one that ate and drank the most, was that guy.

Without minding what kind of stomach he would have, he ate up the mountain of foods.

Even with that bad habit, his belly didn’t bulge at all.

Ah, just what kind of trick did he do? Was it some kind of sleight of hand, or did he have some kind of constitution?

He had an astonishingly high tolerance for alcohol.

Even if he drank a barrel, his complexion didn’t change.

Oops, right.

It was that day.

That day he came out of the room with a face like a dead man.

Unusually, he said to leave him alone, and silently gulped down the strongest alcohol.

Well then I became worried.

It was the first time that guy had that kind of expression.

It was about late at night when the customers became sparse.

The ones who remained there were me, Bruno, Gus, well, that Boris guy was also still awake.

Well, it was the usual group.

In the end, that guy told us this:

“I cannot do it. I cannot stay here. That guy found me.”

At that time, the windows rattled with the wind.

He shrunk back on his chair with a face as if seeing a monster, staring at the entrance with bloodshot eyes as if frightened.

Well, I didn’t understand what he meant.

We were just nodding along.

What is so scary, ah—, was it Bruno who said that?

Anyways, everyone asked.

It was worrying.

He wasn’t supposed to be able to get drunk, but only incoherent mutterings went out of his mouth.

Eventually, the only thing we were able to get out of him was that he was being chased by a terrifying thing but we didn’t know what it was.

Then, it was as you know.

Each of us used our connections to make an arrangement for that guy to successfully escape to Karkinos.

On that moonless night, the coachman Boris and I accompanied him.
That guy kept stuck in the carriage.

‘There are voices of a monster’, or something.

‘There are sounds of nails scratching the horse carriage’, or something.

As such things continued to be heard, even if I didn’t believe in things like monsters, I became scared.

I stuck close to that Boris fellow’s body on the coachman bench, looking around while trembling.

Then, when the eastern sky was getting brighter.

Before I knew it that guy also fell asleep.

It had been a long time since the alcohol in our body subsided, and we sobered up from our drunkenness.

Finally, we saw the city walls and we were relieved too.

Looking at the sky, nothing happened.

It was like a lie that Boris and I were scared until a while ago.

We thought about waking that guy up, and looked into the carriage.

Then, there was no figure of that guy.

Stopping the carriage in haste, we opened the door of the carriage.

Ah, I wasn’t drunk anymore.

But... there was no shadow nor figure of that guy to be found.

What we did find were only a handful of ashes and those dirty expensive clothes together.

(From the testimony of Pierre, a regular customer of Whale’s Barrel)



Aurelia Ducal's Spring Palace.

After a harsh winter, the Aurelia Ducal moved their living space again to this palace.

Erica Aurelia was reading a piece of paper at Wunderkammer that she got permission to use freely from her older brother.

It was a parchment that happened to slide down from the desk when she was looking for a tool for alchemy.

"Oya, is Erica interested in such a story?"

"Huh?"

Hearing a voice from behind her, Erica looked back in surprise.

There was her older brother, Eduart, whom due to him getting around each country from day to day she was unable to meet easily.

"Onii-sama, welcome home. When did you come back?"

"I arrived yesterday at midnight, but I thought that it was not a good idea to wake you up.

Even so, I thought Erica wasn't good at scary stories, it looks like I was wrong.

If that's the case, I should have listened to the reserve scary stories from Elric, huh."

"No, no, please don't fuss over me. Because I only read it by chance."

In contrast with Eduart who was extremely fond of this type of ghost story, Erica refused him properly to ensure her peace from hereafter.

Then, Erica noticed something from Eduart's reply.

"Perhaps, did Onii-sama meet Actorius-sensei?"

"Yeah, because I was going through Knot Reed on the way back. So while I was there I decided to visit him."

Elric who suffered a serious injury in the autumn incident last year continued getting medical treatment in the Trade City Knot Reed.

Recalling Elric's painful scars, Erica's facial expression clouded.

Eduart read Erica's facial expression, a smile showed on his face to make her feel secure.

"It's alright, Elric is doing fine.

His recovery is also going smoothly, thanks to the treatment he received, and there is no after-effect. It seems that he can return to Lindis next month."

"That's... truly relieving."

"Yeah, come and visit Lindis together next time, Erica."

"Yes, I'd love to."

When Eduart gently stroked Erica's cheek, she finally smiled.

It was a harmonious image of an older brother and his younger sister.

"Ehem."

There was a black-haired boy who cleared his throat while looking at the two.

It was Klaus Hafan.

At the coughing sound, Erica finally noticed his existence.

"Eh! Why is Klaus-sama here...?"

"Eduart, it seems that your sister finds it inconvenient if I stay here. I will go back to Hafan."

"Wait a minute, Klaus-kun. Don't say such a thing, won't you help me a little more?"

"Aah, I'm sorry. It's been a long time, Klaus-sama. Please enjoy your stay in Aurelia."

Klaus's attitude became sulky and he turned the other way, spitting out.

Eduart smoothed things over in a hurry, and Erica glossed over her attitude and made a respectful greeting.

"It has been a while since our last contact, Erica. I will be in your care for a while.

Anyway, after this I will be dragged around to another land right away."

“Hahaha, I will be troubled if you scowl at me like that.”

Compared to the lively Eduart, Erica realized that a strong fatigue was drifting from Klaus.

“Klaus-sama, somehow you look awfully tired today, are you okay?”

“This man here always uses me like a tool on every opportunity. I feel like a debt slave.”

“Stop saying slave, Klaus-kun. I’m always humane, right?”

“Eduart, if you are humane, the demon kinds will surely be humane as well.”

“Ahaha, that’s harsh.”

It was much better than Klaus plucking such things as the plot of lands and ingots.

Since it was to pay for the expensive wands’ cost, it couldn’t be helped that he was somewhat overworked.

Nonetheless, Eduart also acknowledged it, and that was the cause of his excessive exploitation.

“If you are that tired, Klaus-sama, I have a potion for that, so why don’t you try it?”

Saying so, Erica took out a potion bottle from her bag.

Inside the bottle, red, purple, and green marble patterns of the mysterious liquid were swaying to and fro.

Klaus looked at the vicious liquid and lifted his right eyebrow, while Eduart’s smile froze.

“Would you like to drink this?”

“Oh, this is... is this something people can drink?”

“Yes, it seems to be an excellent potion for recovering from fatigue and magical power depletion. Onii-sama, would you like to try it too?”

It was a potion with violent colors that seemed like one would be cursed just by having it.

It was quite poisonous-looking, but Erica, whose danger sense capability was

somewhat short, didn't notice it.

Of course, in Klaus and Eduart's brain, the danger signal was blinking and beeping in warning.

By the way, this potion was a prototype of the potion master Sergei, a good companion of Harold Nibelheim.

Because it was a great success for those two inhumane people, safety and efficacy were guaranteed only on their side.

However, Erica herself had not tasted it, and she didn't know that this potion was overflowing with a big problem in its taste.

"Hou, the main components of magical power are the cerebrospinal fluid of kraken, the horn of a unicorn, and an extract from alraune, huh."

"The effect of the potion seems to be reliable, right?"

Klaus struggled with his answer and his line of sight wandered between the label that was stuck on the potion and Erica's expression.

Since Erica recommended it out of her kindness, he didn't want to refuse her.

Klaus opened the stopper of the potion bottle with eyes without light that seemed to have given up, and drank a mouthful after a little bit of hesitation.

"Guh...!!"

"Klaus-kun! Are you okay?!"

"Does it not fit your tastebud?"

"N-no... it has a terribly odd taste, but it's not that bad. I feel that my magical power is replenished considerably and my body becomes lighter."

For that reason, Klaus slowly drank the rest of the potion.

Looking at Klaus' state, Eduart stroked his chest in relief and picked up a potion bottle.

If it was the usual, Eduart would have checked it more carefully.

However, the fact that his cute little sister had prepared it for him had relaxed his vigilance.

“Well, since you are being generous, I will also drink it.”

Eduart opened the stopper and gulped it down without caution.

At that moment, his motion stopped.

Eduart rarely ever changed his complexion, but his face was pale.

“Ukh...! Uuuu~~~~!!”

“Onii-sama!? A-are you okay~~~~!!”

“Fuh, Eduart... you’re unexpectedly weak.”

Eduart held his mouth and ran away.

Giving a sidelong glance at the Aurelia brother and sister who were in a panic, a composed smile showed on Klaus’ face.

Erica was looking at Klaus with a complicated expression and opened her mouth.

“Is Klaus-sama okay?”

“Since I have trained myself, this is nothing.”

“Are you also training your tongue and stomach... no, as expected that’s impossible, then how did you do it?”

“It’s a matter of spiritual discipline. If I am perturbed only by this much, I’m not fit to be a mage.”

“Klaus-sama...”

Erica laughed at Klaus who was as arrogant as usual.

Klaus’ cheeks dyed red seeing the rare natural smile of that Erica.

Meanwhile, Erica was distracted by another thing, she didn’t notice Klaus’ changes.

“Ah... that’s right, speaking of Klaus-sama!”

Erica took out two kinds of clear perfume bottles from the small boxes stacked on the long table.

She ordered it via Harold, they were the fashionable perfumes at Knot Reed.

“I was planning to give these perfumes as gifts for Klaus-sama and Ann-sama.

Since you are here, may I hand them over now?”

“Hou, there is also one for me, huh.”

“Yes. It seems that recently men also have an interest in perfumes.”

“Is there something like that going on now?”

Klaus took a bottle in a doubtful manner on the outside, but he seemed not as dissatisfied as he led others believe.

“The bottle is elaborate, huh. The blue of the glass is pretty deep.”

“As expected from Klaus-sama, you have discerning eyes.”

The bottle was a vibrant blue glass with elegant silver to finish off as quality goods.

With that, even for Klaus who was familiar with the sophisticated Hafan culture couldn't help but admit the craftsmanship.

“First of all, for Ann-sama is this [Sweet Song of Angels] for women.

And the next one is for Klaus-sama, [Sweet Melody of Lovers] for men, please take them.”

“Angel? Sweet? Lover? What's with these lackadaisical names that set my teeth on edge.”

“There, there, aren't they sound pleasant? Charming, right?”

Even with Klaus' sharp tongue, Erica didn't mind and kept explaining.

“In the northwestern area where these two perfumes are popular, there's a rumor that secret love will come true for those who wear it.

If, there is someone that Klaus-sama always thinking of—”

“D-don't get the wrong idea! I'm—!”

Klaus unintentionally interrupted her with a loud voice, he immediately realized that and closed his mouth.

Erica stared at Klaus with a slightly surprised look.

"I... that, there is none, that I secretly thinking of.

My creed is to be fair and square. I won't run and I won't hide... so there's none."

"Really, Klaus-sama, please do not get mad all of a sudden. Isn't this just a what if story?"

"I-is that so, I'm sorry. That's right, yeah."

"Then, while we at it, please try the scent.

Try the one for women, since it's the one that has already been opened."

Erica opened another bottle and ran a drop to a white silk handkerchief.

When she flapped the handkerchief in the air, a sweet scent spread between the two.

It was a gorgeous and sweet scent of flowers that mainly composed of roses, along with it there were also the mystical scents of edelweiss and sandalwood.

"This is..."

Klaus' heart unexpectedly throbbed similar to the mysterious sensation he remembered having.

The saturation of the world rose, everything that appears in his eyes vividly changed.

It felt like there was a pleasant tranquil heavenly melody, like a light rain that drizzled gently.

"What do you think?"

"...Huh!?"

When he quickly raised his head, there was a golden sparkling fairy princess standing there.

To the extent that Klaus felt like the beauty of the girl in front of him was brilliant.

He shook his head in a hurry and deflected his eyes from Erica.

Until the moment he was called out, Klaus didn't realize he had blank expression.

"I don't think it's just a perfume. It's comparable to charm magic."

"I'm glad that you like it."

Suddenly, Klaus became aware that he was alone with Erica.

'Secret love will come true', these words spread quietly like a ripple in his consciousness. Being swept away by the atmosphere, Klaus felt a sense of crisis and desperately sought an unrelated topic in his head.

"B-b-but, that's, you know. You know, that Knot Reed's Cursed Sword seems to have been a major incident."

"Aah, that was about the autumn of last year."

"The old aircraft carrier seems to have been a wreck."

"It was regrettable. Fortunately, the new model aircraft carrier was intact."

"I heard that you also participated in the launching ceremony. I'm just glad that you were safe."

Thanks to Erica getting into the change of topic, Klaus gradually regained his condition.

On the other hand, Erica carefully chose the topic to pretend that she wasn't recklessly deeply involved in that incident.

"If Klaus-sama were in that situation, could you handle it with extensive magic?"

"No, that would be difficult."

"Oh my, it's unusual for you to be this timid."

"With large mass of lava that materializes by forcibly overwriting and eventually destroying matters if it is disassembled, as expected it would be too much for me to handle."

He couldn't lay a hand on it before it materialized.

When it materialized, he had to either blow it away, freeze it, or continue to support the Protective Circle in the form of a bowl.

Whatever the case, Klaus' preliminary calculation said that ordinary mages would find themselves being out of their depths.

"Only by using the cathedral's spiritual pulse to amplify the magic that it would be

enough for me to prevent a cursed sword.”

“If so, do we need about sixteen high-ranking mages that are as powerful as Klaus-sama?”

“It’s possible for me to say this because the mechanism is already known.

Although the behavior of that magic hadn’t been found out, Duke Aurelia held down the damage on the spot at once.

And the son of Earl Nibelheim had devised a way that completely invalidated the 15 cursed swords.

It can be said that each of them has considerably extraordinary abilities.”

Especially the potential of the Nibelheim’s successor is very frightening, Klaus groaned.

Erica couldn’t look directly to his eyes in spite of listening to his words.

“Right. Speaking of Nibelheim, didn’t he get involved in a fraud case too?”

“You know well, Klaus-sama.”

“If you hear that the transition magic was used illegally for the crime, there is no reason to not be worried.

When I arrived in Lindis, I heard about it from the experts of transition magic who were in charge of the investigation.

It seems that a clever concealment was used so it would be overlooked by even mages.”

“It was such a malicious scam. It was fortunate that it could be ascertained before it became a major incident.”

Erica chose her words so that the scandal of the Nibelheim family wouldn’t spread.

While sweeping away a bad topic, she suddenly remembered a particular concern.

“But, while we were able to end the calamity, there is a household whose whereabouts and life and death are still unclear.”

“Isn’t that just the accomplice running away?”

“It is said that the whole family disappeared without leaving any traces.”

“As if they were apparitions, huh?”

“Yes, it’s like something strange hid the whole household, how scary...”

“I see. You are concerned about the disappearance case, because you read this material earlier.”

Klaus picked up a piece of material entitled “The Man Who Disappeared” from the desk and stared at her.

Erica quietly nodded and opened her mouth.

“Everyone disappeared in this way... somehow, it looks like a delusion.”

“Is that so? For example, what if the man who disappeared was the main criminal of the fraud?”

Is there a possibility that this aforementioned household disappeared in the same way?”

“No way. For example, with magic, but is there such a way of harming people?”

“I have some ideas... it’s difficult to identify by this alone.

I should be able to check the remaining ashes or at least the site.”

“Such a thing... this, is not a fact but a made-up story... right?”

Erica tilted her head while hiding her impatience with a smile.

Klaus continued his words with his hard blue eyes staring at Erica.

“I hope it’s a fictional story, but if it’s not then it’s a problem.

Beside magic, a similar kind of killing can be done by certain kinds of monsters.”

“What is it, for example?”

“Right, for example—”

Stopping in the middle of his sentence, Klaus silenced his mouth with a click.

The expression of Klaus who was scowling became even more severe, and Erica shrunk back.

“This story ends here.”

“Eh?”

“But, before I finish talking, I will advise you.

Whether it's this case or the fraud case, do not investigate anymore.

Even if there is a case similar to this, never get involved.

Even if you tentatively get involved, do not get involved deeper."

"I understand. Do I look that at risk to Klaus-sama?"

Klaus didn't answer Erica's question which she said as a joke.

Instead of answering, he kept on a serious face.

"If you cannot escape by all means, come to me first."

"That's..."

"This is to protect you. Okay, you must absolutely do it. Promise me this."

Klaus' tone didn't allow any refusal.

After Erica suffered for a moment, she tried to tell him her answer.

But her answer was blocked by a cheerful voice that was heard along with a knock.

"Erica, Klaus-kun, would you like tea?"

Before they knew it, Eduart was standing at the entrance of the room.

The smile showed on Eduart's face told them that he had regained his condition.

"Onii-sama, are you feeling alright now?"

"I'm still in a critical condition. I may die soon if I don't immediately cleanse my palate with sweet baked confection."

"Eduart, are you a kid...?"

"Jeez, Onii-sama."

To Eduart's childish joke, Klaus returned to his sour look as if sulking.

As if they were children of the same age, Erica softly smiled.

The atmosphere that was kept up when they were on the topic of the disappearance case was lost, and Erica switched her thoughts to the lighter ones.

“Then, I will go ahead and prepare it.

There is *something* that I would like the two of you to see.”

That said, Erica headed to the drawing room to prepare for the tea ceremony.

Just a few days ago, a simple yet beautiful tea cup prototype that had its number of colors reduced in order to sell it to Hafan had just arrived.

Since it was the aim, she was planning to hold a porcelain presentation to Eduart and Klaus.

By the time that Erica would have been far enough, Klaus deployed a barrier in silence. He incorporated several kinds of soundproof spells, it was the magic of countermeasures against eavesdropping.

“Eduart, keep the shady materials under lock and key.”

“Absolutely. I have no excuse to say.”

To the extremely good point, Eduart shrugged his shoulders and received the material presented by Klaus.

Eduart folded the material, put it between the pages of his notebook, and put it away in his pocket.

“The fraud case of Argene territory, were vampires involved?”

“There are possibilities of that.”

“The fraud ring, a mage that did the trick to the transition magic, and the merchant household that got dragged into it.

All of them unwittingly became the underlings of the vampires.

Even if they weren’t imprinted by the blood-sucking action, leaving their temporary life depleted, and died as sacrificial pieces.”

“Although the consistent things match, it is nothing more than a speculation. We wouldn’t know until we examine the remaining ashes or the actual site.”

“If that’s the case, you must have taken it into consideration, right?”

Eduart responded by smiling silently.

Klaus took his silence as a confirmation.

In addition to visiting the ill, he had secretly investigated the mansion of the merchant household who had disappeared, Klaus concluded in his head.

“What do you think is the objective, assuming it is as you guessed? Don’t tell me that the vampires are trying to make money at this point.”

“If I were a vampire, I would aim for the destruction of the County of Nibelheim.”

“There are many other distinguished people in the northwestern part, though?”

“There must be something that they have that the other distinguished families don’t have.

Of course it’s not the genius boy, but something that is attached to the territory itself.”

To Eduart’s point, Klaus nodded slightly.

“I see, there is a tower in the Nibelheim territory, which is one of the essential elements of the ley lines in the northwestern area. They aim for the erosion of the ley lines, huh.”

“The owner of that tower is the Nibelheim family, but Turm family was the one that commanded for the construction of the tower.

Aurelia’s Turm family is a distinguished family that originated from Hafan’s Tour family who was in charge of building magical towers.

If the tower they built were contaminated, the restoration of the ley line is not easy. That would be favorable for the vampires, right?”

“This has to be related to the series of riots last year. How annoying.”

Since spring last year, the attack on the spirit-related facilities repeatedly occurred on Ichthyes continent.

The invasion of magically-made monsters into Lindis’ basement floor which was the core of the ley lines in the heart of the continent.

Simultaneous multiple grave robberies to the tombs of Casketia era sealed by the ley lines on various regions.

If these were the only cases, he would also think that it was just a coincidence.

When there was a fraud to Nibelheim which was the key point of the northern area’s ley lines, there was no way he could dismiss it as coincidence.

“The aim of the guy who was secretly pulling the threads while hiding, is to weaken the magical protection that is spread out throughout Ichthyes, huh.”

“Your answer is half-correct. As expected, Klaus-kun.”

“Eduart, just say what’s the other half already.”

“Outside the incidents involving the ley lines, there were cases that were caused by Casketia’s relics, right?”

Hearing Eduart’s question, Klaus remembered the incident involving himself.

Strangely, it was an incident that happened on the same day as the invasion of a monster into Lindis’ basement.

As a matter of fact, Klaus recalled that the relics of Casketia had been putting people in critical situations.

The necklace with fascination magic that pushed Klaus into the Ruins of Visitor.

The stirrup with intoxication magic that caused Auguste to fall from the dragon.

And the accident that happened at the excavation site of the remains of the Cursed Sword of Fire also confirmed the trace that was caused by a magical relic.

None of these had minimum effect, they were despicable methods that aimed for the worst tragedy.

“Children of a duke, a dragon knight with a promising future, a student exceling in expertise.

They were all aimed to assassinate the people who are beneficial to the nation.

However, they were not the best plan to ensure certain death, they were only unreliable measures.”

“It may be important that although they were dangerous, death was not necessarily the aim.”

“I don’t think there is such a lenient vampire.”

Klaus urged Eduart for the continuation as an indication that he wasn’t fully satisfied with the explanation.

“Friends and family, lover... those who are deprived of their important people cannot survive just like they were before.

The heart of those who have lost love, friendship, and pride are more likely to be twisted and bended with a variation in degree.”

“Taking advantage of the weak spot in their heart, the vampires made them their pawns, huh. For example, that Louis Ode-Ignitia.”

Louis had been imprisoned inside the tower ever since the Advent Festival’s incident. Even now, he was still under suspicion of being involved with vampires and being their underling, so the interrogation and investigation continued.

He was a royalty who still had his future ahead of him, but he was indoctrinated biased information by someone when he was in a vulnerable state after the mysterious death of his immediate family, and became distorted.

“Pawns... my opinion is slightly different.”

“Well then, what do you think, Eduart.”

“I’m sure that *he* was lonely.

I myself have a similar notion, I’m looking for others who operate in the same way. Instead of pawns, I want a partner whose heart is dyed in the same color.”

Eduart lifted the bottle of potion as a diversion, rocking it so as to look through it. The red liquid which only remained as much as one drop, spread thinly at the bottom of the transparent glass bottle.

“Heart dyed in the same color, huh...

Speaking of which, we heard similar words at Karkinos.

‘You will become the same thing I am’, was it.”

“...That was a precious testimony to support my hypothesis.”

Eduart turned away from Klaus and said that without emotion.

Klaus thought that Eduart didn’t want him to step into that topic any further and changed the topic.

“But, the way it was done was too unreliable.

I wonder whether the Lunatic King was very much a coward, or an extremely secretive person.”

“I wonder. Anyway, no matter how secretive he was, cowardice is different though.”

Eduart said so and shrugged his shoulders.

“What are you thinking about, Eduart?”

“Well, this hypothesis is still no more than a speculation.

He seems to be in a state where he cannot participate in the incidents directly due to some circumstances.

So, on the contrary, it may not be possible for him to increase his underlings freely.”

“I didn’t know about this. Why do you think so?”

Eduart put down the glass bottle while contemplating.

The red that had spread in the bottle gathered at the bottom with the passage of time and returned to a small droplet.

“For example, he is obstructed somewhere in a state where he cannot move.

Therefore, it was only possible to cause incidents indirectly through his pawns or scattered cursed objects and put up traps.

...I mean, how about that?”

“Even if that was just a hypothetical situation of the Lunatic King. What’s with that miserable situation.”

“It’s absolutely true. To begin with, it’s a matter of who caught the Lunatic King, who was able to pretend to be another person.”

Klaus remembered such illusion as if the enemy had disappeared as smoke the moment he hunted the enemy’s tail.

It was as if the enemy was on the other side of the optical illusion which laid on top of one another.

There was a heavy silence at the Wunderkammer.

At such time, the voice of a girl calling out to them echoed in the distance.
They remembered that Erica was waiting for them.

“Oops, my cute Erica had prepared tea for me.”

“You mean for *us*, right?”

“Yeah, it’s for me. Aah, speaking of which, were you invited to join us?”

“Eduart, *you*, I’ll remember this.”

Klaus clicked his tongue and chased after Eduart who went out of the room quickly.
Klaus learned a sense of security somewhat on the smell of black tea drifting with the smell of spring flowers.

End of Arc 3

You may have realized it, but there are three groups of vampire investigators here, and the information Eduart-Klaus-Elric have is not known to Professor-Auguste or Erica-Tirnanog-Palug and vice versa.

【Interlude】

Mysterious Story, "All-Black Mysterious Person"

It was when I was on the sea route home, bringing back big negotiations to Knot Reed.

The ship's trip was going well, and it was scheduled to arrive at the harbor at dawn.

Somehow, I guessed there was a premonition that I had not realized at that time.

I could not sleep well so I decided to go out on the deck alone, facing the night wind.

The fog was thick that night, so one wouldn't be able to see other's face even if they were only 10 steps away.

There was not one star in the night sky, the only illumination came from the lantern which was lit and the light of a lighthouse that could be seen vaguely in the distance.

Even though the visibility was bad, it was my own ship that I knew by heart.

I was leisurely walking while seeing the orange light showing on the distant shore.

Then, suddenly, a big, all-black guy appeared in front of me.

It seemed that he was a former soldier, his limbs were wearing golem-made prosthesis.

Perhaps he didn't want his face to be seen, he was wearing a black mantle covering everything under his eyes over his face armor.

The man was soaked as if he had crawled up from the sea some time ago.

Drip.

Drip.

Droplets of water were dripping from his wet mantle onto the deck.

No, no, there was no way he was in such situation.

He shouldn't have just crawled up from the ocean onto the deck.

That was why, needless to say, that I felt creeped out as to why he was soaking wet.

More than anything, the man's eerie atmosphere made me struck with fear.

I felt the lump of hair on the back of my neck standing upright and said, "Who are you?"

Now, why did I do that, I wonder?

Perhaps I wanted to confirm that the man was just a human being.

Maybe I would hear a funny story that he just made a blunder and poured water over himself, I quickly felt relieved.

It was then.

In the fog, something big was swaying.

It was swaying quietly.

The swaying thing was many times as thick as the mast, and I saw some big circular patterns on it.

At that moment, I finally realized.

That was a tentacle of a kraken.

The circular patterns were its suckers.

I didn't know whether I took a wrong route due to the fog, or the kraken had left its den in an outing.

But, I knew immediately that it was dangerous.

Because of the krakens, many ships were dragged into the sea and sank, including my acquaintance's ship.

No way, I couldn't believe that my ship would be the next in line in suffering the misfortune, I had never seen this coming.

Anyway, in great haste, I ran away trying to take refuge in the cabin.

But, just as I was already a few steps away from the cabin, I suddenly realized with a start.

I didn't hear that all-black man's footsteps.

“You too, hurry up and get over here!”

I cried out, but even if I looked back, there was no figure of that big guy.
Even when I looked around, there was no one on the deck.

No way, did he get caught by the kraken?

I was frightened by such imagination.

Even a ship that had been caught couldn't be saved.

If it was a person, they wouldn't be alive anymore, or so I thought.

From the waves, I saw the eerie, shining, big eye of the kraken.

And then, beyond doubt I was also in danger.

When I thought so, I could see even more terrible things beyond the fog.

There, it was a hand.

In the white fog, I saw the shadow of a black hand, which was many times the size of the tentacles.

No, not the tentacles, it might have been thicker than the kraken's torso.

Even the hand alone was that big.

Imagining the whole size, I was terrified.

It had to be many times the size of the ship... no, the Water Palace of Knot Reed.

The huge hand caught the kraken, and a scream like a shrill trumpet resounded in the foggy sea.

It might be my first time hearing a kraken screams.

The kraken was resisting, but it was no use.

The size of the hand was in a different league, it was like a fight between an elephant and an ant.

That huge hand dragged the kraken into the sea easily and disappeared.

A large whirlpool was created in place where the hand and the kraken had sunk. The ship swayed greatly, and I desperately clung to my surroundings and endured it. Well, I thought that following the kraken, this ship would undoubtedly go next.

However, no matter how long I waited, the next shake wouldn't come.

When I opened my eyes nervously, the fog was already gone and there was neither the kraken nor the black hand.

Even when I talked about it like this, you will not believe it.

I guess, you were thinking that my mind was crazy.

If you think so, please see the starboard on the side of our ship.

Because there are traces of the suckers of the kraken who crawled up to cling to the ship.

(The story of Arnaud, shop owner of a well-established herbal shop)



Seasons came around and it was around the time when autumn came near.

Erica was visiting Trade City Knot Reed on Aurelia Ducal's official business.

After arriving at Water Palace and putting her luggage in the room where she would stay this morning, Erica immediately headed towards Turm Wand Store.

Unlike her previous visits when she was travelling incognito, this time she asked her father for permission and took a maid as chaperone.

Therefore, unfortunately Tirnanog was in his small golem form, and Palug was disguised as a cat.

Knot Reed's Town of All Kinds of Goods after a year was as lively as ever, and Erica's footsteps were also light.

Many people were crowding in Turm Wand Store.

Erica heard that Harold's rumors spread and the customers from neighboring aristocrats were increasing day by day.

Along with that, there were two clerks in charge of customer service. A young girl with brown hair and a young man with red hair.

Leaving the wand restoration consultation to the maid, Erica moved to the back of the store.

The porcelain dishes decorating the aisle leading to Wunderkammer were increasing than a year ago.

Next to the dish repaired with gold lacquer, the same patterned dish made by Gilbert was lined up.

Just by looking at it, it seemed the Turm parent-child present relationship could be guessed.

Erica knocked and opened the Wunderkammer.

Inside the Wunderkammer seemed even more messy than a year ago.

Beyond the sea of materials and alchemy tools that didn't leave space for feet, there was a redheaded boy who was keen on reading.

It seemed that as usual, he didn't even notice the sound of her knocking in his concentration.

"Long time no see, Harold."

When Erica called out, Harold looked back at once.

The serious look that she saw for a moment quickly disappeared, and friendly atmosphere showed on his face.

Harold ran over to Erica while avoiding objects that were randomly rolling.

"Erica! You have arrived? You're earlier than I thought!"

"It was thanks to the new available route.

Recently, it seems that the damage of kraken has decreased a lot."

"Ah~, so that's why. That's good. I'm glad to see you anyway!"

About three months ago, damage by krakens in the area around Knot Reed was on a downward trend.

Experts believed that the population of the large-sized krakens itself was decreasing.

As a result of the joint survey of Aurelia-Knot Reed-Lindis, several waters that were once designated as dangerous waters were proved to be navigable even by commercial merchant ships.

Those waters were incorporated into the new route and the sea distribution in the West part of the continent had a slight improvement in efficiency.

While talking about such a thing, the small golem at her feet secretly stuck out his chest and was proudly posing.

Yes, the sharp decline of the kraken was caused by Tirnanog.

The purpose was to reduce the dangerous waters in the northwestern part.

The increase in the large-sized krakens was caused by the magical power discharge from the neighboring altar of vampires.

Removing the contaminated altars was risky for the present Palug whose angelic power had not fully recovered yet.

Therefore, as a symptomatic treatment, Tirnanog was hunting the magical beasts that had become larger and ferocious by absorbing the magical power of the altars, starting from the krakens.

“That said, recently, the older brothers of Gilbert-aniki seem to have become busy.

Since the shipping route has become safe, the number of businesses entering the sea distribution increased, and new customers are coming.

Thanks to the number of ships sinking is decreasing, the insurer’s profits are also rising.”

“Oh my, is that so?”

“Instead, the hunters’ business is suddenly falling.”

“There is a harmful effect in an unexpected place, huh. So, there is a change in the employment rate... sooner or later there will be security problems...”

“Eh? Erica, did you say something?”

Oops, sorry. I caused you to talk while standing.

Please come in and sit there... or not. Wait, I can make a little space."

Harold tidied up the tools and materials scattered in haste, opening up a way to a chaise lounge.

This chaise lounge was not there when Erica first came.

It seemed that only around the chaise lounge which was bought with visitors in mind, that was neatly tidied up.

When Erica sat on the chaise lounge, a golden cat quickly took position over her knees. Harold also sat down on a chair across Erica.

"Ah, right. I will brew us some tea. We just have new tea leaves."

"Sorry for bothering you, Harold."

"No, no, it seems to be a long talk anyway.

By the way, where is that all-black mister? I wonder if he can come and meet up with Master?"

"No, he has other errands."

Erica's smile seemed apologetic for a moment.

This time she was going out with her father's approval.

It was difficult to bring around an all-black suspicious person when she already had a chaperone.

"I see, that's too bad. I thought I could see him after a long time."

[...]

Tirnanog stroked the back of Harold who was disappointed.

Harold who saw the gesture reflexively gave a broad smile.

"This golem, it looks like it is comforting me."

"That's right. Isn't he a gentle child?"

“Eh—, what’s with that. Do you intend to brag?

The one who constructed it to console downhearted person was you, right?”

Erica laughed and accepted Harold’s comment.

Tirnanog shrugged his shoulders and sat down next to Erica.

While admiring the life-like movements, Harold exited the room to make tea.

“...We should come here with your humanoid form next time.

Tir will go to the wand store first and wait there, and we will join you later, how about it?”

When Erica suggested it, Tirnanog silently nodded.

After a while, Harold returned with the new tea set on a tray.

The new work had a luxurious design but with a calm atmosphere, grape leaves were drawn on it only with gold color.

When Harold brewed the black tea, the fragrance of bergamot spread inside the Wunderkammer.

The scent somewhat resembled Earl Grey¹.

Erica was impressed that something very similar to the previous world was made, although there were neither Lapsang souchong² nor Earl Grey.

“Now then~, what should I talk about?”

“How about starting with the story of this tea?”

“As expected from Erica, I’m glad you asked that.

This is a blend developed by the tea sector of Turm in cooperation with Bell-anechan.”

Erica and Harold began with the story of the black tea and talked about various things.

The majority of those talks had been mentioned in the letters, but it was fun to actually meet and talk in person.

Blue glass and silver perfume bottles using cobalt that were used in Bell’s store were

popular, and the Nibelheim craftsmen were busy because of that.

As a result of this influence, blue glass and silver accessories showed signs of being a trend in this autumn.

Gilbert finally proposed to Bell three days ago.

She was told that it was a confession with 5-6 small boats fully loaded with rare roses ordered from Ignitia.

Despite proposing confidently, his reply seemed to have been on-hold.

Gilbert who was waiting for the reply was uneasy and it seemed that there was a possibility that he wouldn't be able to get any work done.

While the boss was in such a miserable state, the porcelain business itself was doing fine.

The other day, a sometsuka dinnerware which he was proud of was baked after holding it off for a year, and was presented to the Ignitia royal family.

By spring, mass orders for seika tea sets dropped in unexpectedly from Hafan Ducal.

Gilbert's partner was found, and it was decided to put him in charge of the branch store in the Duchy of Hafan.

Also, when Erica told him about the course of Elric's treatment which she heard from Eduart, Harold was delighted.

At Knot Reed, Elric who first conveyed the crisis of Cursed Sword of Fire was treated as a hero.

When he tried to send recovery potion to Lindis with instructions from Erica, it seemed that he was found out by the potion master Sergei.

Eventually, it was said that it was settled by dispatching a large amount of potions with the joint signature of each company in Town of All Kinds of Goods.

Speaking of the Cursed Sword of Fire, Erica remembered something.

"Ah! What happened to Knot Reed's rumors about the angel?"

"It's still going on. Did you see the amulets sold out around here?"

"Eh... I certainly saw it, but is Knot Reed's angel has that kind of image?"

Erica glanced at the cat on her knees.

Most of the amulets that had been sold were vague designs with a high-degree of abstraction in the size of a key holder.

Certainly, no one would think that the real angel was a cat.

The main culprit of the rumors was crying out with a forced '*meoow*' while averting her eyes.

"Aniki was disappointed since it would have been profitable if we also participate in the rumors.

Because we are more or less the source of the rumors."

"That's true..."

"It's a late start, but we were talking about making an amulet of the angel made of white porcelain."

Erica, who was hoping for the rumors to abate, awkwardly smiled back.

Looking at the girl's state, Harold gave her a grin as he added.

"So, I told him that we should make a full-blown figurine.

Therefore, Aniki wanted to ask you to be the model—?"

"Stop it."

Erica responded promptly without leaving as much as a second gap.

Her expression disappeared in a moment and she looked at Harold with hard and gloomy, indifferent eyes as if she wanted to stab him.

At that atmosphere, Harold unintentionally flinched.

"E-eh~? Isn't it fine. Your face is especially beautiful."

"Well then, you can use Auguste-sama's face.

You see, it's a beautiful face and he surely looks better than me."

"No, no, that's not good! If it's the face of His Highness Crown Prince, it will surely be exposed, right?"

That person, he knows who the origin of the rumors is, so he will put the screw on

me.”

Harold hastily stopped Erica who had issued an alternative proposal that was not the best idea.

Erica’s expression had changed unnoticed, she seemed to enjoy Harold’s dismay.

While cursing in his mind at the other party who was as cunning as ever, Harold’s face involuntarily broke into a smile.

After pondering about it for a moment with an evil face, Erica smiled with an evil face as before.

While stroking the throat of the cat on her knees with a gentle hand, she suggested to Harold.

“I will send you two pieces of portraits later, you can make a model from it.”

“Is there any reason for it?”

“I am acquainted with a wonderfully beautiful woman. She is very famous, but unexpectedly her face is not well-known.”

“Heeh? You are well-acquainted as usual.

Then, please send it directly to Aniki’s workshop.

It seems that he wants to hurry up and make it before the he misses the fad.”

If there was any problem, it would be directed to Gilbert-aniki.

Harold thought so, and decided to throw all the responsibilities at him.

By the time the portraits arrived, the turmoil about his proposal should have settled down.

Their topic afterwards moved on to wands and new magic tools.

But, at that time Harold had forgotten.

Even if Gilbert’s proposal succeeded, the more difficult event would continue.



Seasons went around, and early summer had arrived. The season of the Advent Festival was approaching again.

In Ignitia's Island of Messenger, many angel statues were displayed even more than the usual.

In the royal castle hall, Queen Adeleid was giving directions to transport the decorations of the Advent Festival.

In addition to the traditional stone angel statues, this year figurines made in the northwestern part was also brought in.

It was delivered by the joint signatures of the Nibelheim family and the Turm family.

"Mother, the decorative cloth has arrived from Hafan. Is it okay if I bring it here?"

"Oh my, thank you, Auguste. Since the arrangement of the statues will take a bit longer, please do it afterwards."

Adeleid, who was gazing at the angelic figure of a brave young man, turned back at the call of her son.

Auguste realized that it was an unfamiliar texture, and remembered the gifts from the Northwest.

"That's an example of the figurine, isn't it? ... It looks like a strong angel."

"Isn't it? It is somewhat similar to the figure of young Henry, so I inadvertently was captivated by it."

"Heeh? Maybe they made it to be like father?"

Auguste nodded to Adeleid's words and stared at the statue of the angel.

Burly body that was overflowing with youthfulness and vitality.

A bright and refreshing smiling face that people would praise for, a glimpse of child-like face on the daring features.

Certainly, it seemed like King Henry.

However, the actual model was not him in particular.

It was the ancestor of Henry and Auguste, the Severe King Jean.

“The other angel is also wonderful. Please take a look at it.”

Adeleid pointed to an angel figure covered with a protective cloth.

Perhaps it would resemble mother?

Auguste thought about such a thing while turning over the cloth, and then he exclaimed.

“T-this is... eh?”

“See? Auguste, doesn’t it look exactly like you?”

Adeleid stared at Auguste and the angel alternately with a full smile.

It was a beautiful angelic figure with a pure smile filled with affection.

Certainly, its features were as alike as Auguste as two peas in a pod.

However, the body was clearly designed as a girl.

This one was modeled after the Conquest King Guillaume.

However, each one of the porcelain makers thought that he was a girl by seeing only Guillaume’s portrait.

And Gilbert who was unable to calm down due to the series of turmoils such as his engagement and marriage, didn’t notice that it closely resembled Auguste.

“It makes me feel somewhat complicated to see my face in this way...”

“It is very cute, isn’t it? It is a popular design in Knot Reed.”

A conversation exchanged at Water Palace during autumn a year and a half before came to Auguste’s mind.

As the consequences of delegating the incident’s post-processing to Harold, there were rumors of an angel’s appearance and disappearance.

(No way, maybe this is a form of his revenge...)

Auguste nodded to Adeleid while hiding his upset with a shaky smile.

“I’m touched by the wonderful workmanship.

I’d like to make opportunities and *greet* the Knot Reed’s porcelain workshop.”

“That’s a good idea – surely the craftsmen will be pleased as well.”

Adeleid agreed with Auguste’s proposal and promised to push the visit plan.

Auguste bowed perfectly and quickly left the hall.

Now then, I wonder how the northwestern porcelain workshop will explain this.

While walking in the corridor of the royal castle, such a thing was turning around in Auguste’s head.

The figurine decorated in the hall of the royal castle at the Advent Festival was looked on by many people.

After that, the angel statues made in Gilbert’s porcelain workshop became prevalent among Ignitian aristocrats.

Gilbert’s porcelain workshop supposedly insisted that the model of the angel was not His Highness Crown Prince until the end, but the person who became the model remained unknown.

¹ Earl Grey tea is a tea blend which has been flavoured with the addition of oil of bergamot.

² Lapsang souchong is a smoky dark tea from the mountains of Fujian.

Mysterious Story, "Scarlet Enchantress"

That day, I had a fight with that Thomas fellow.

Ah, Thomas was my best friend, he was my buddy whom I was doing the textile business together with.

There was a discrepancy in my work.

Actually, it was my fault, but because that guy was too stubborn, I unintentionally flared up at him.

Because in the depths of my heart I knew that I should apologize, I felt very uncomfortable.

That was probably the reason.

Unknowingly, my legs led me to the church.

What was the name of the church?

It was a church in the vicinity of my house.

What did you say?

Well, there was no signboard and I didn't remember the name.

It was already late at night, but I could see a red shadow from a glance.

If you said red in this church, then it had to be the sister's clothes, right?

And then, I remembered that there was a confession chamber in that church.

I was wondering whether there was a sister in the church in <Dead Leaf Street>.

Well, it was common for these churches to interchange with each other.

"Good evening. Sorry for coming in this late. There is something I want to confess."

As I excused myself and entered, I heard an answer.

It was a woman's voice that was strangely sexy, *'Please come in'*.

I unintentionally felt startled.

Even by listening to someone's voice, there were voices that could convince you that it was a beautiful woman, right?

This sister was exactly like that.

With a youthful and tender voice, mixed with saccharine feeling of the sound... no, I didn't care about such a thing.

I entered the confession room and the rest was the usual.

Well, she was a nice person.

She was eager to listen to my story, and before I knew it my mind felt lighter.

Then, suddenly I was excited.

Well, it was natural.

There was a possibility that a great beauty was there, only separated by a single wall.

If I didn't come to confess, I would like to ask her which sister she was, I was a little disappointed.

If she preached with such a sexy voice, I would go to the church everyday.

Saying thank you on parting, and on the next second I called her.

No, this was actually not good.

Putting my hand into the gap and held the hand of the sister or something like that.

Hehehe, well, wasn't it fine?

Just a bit of a side benefit, but my devotion also became stronger.

The moment I touched her hand, it was surprisingly hairy.

Perhaps that was not her hand and I might have touched her muffler or something instead.

Then the sister, with her sweet voice said.

"Oh my, you can't do that. We are seen by God."

She whispered.

I thought that being scolded by this sister would not be that bad.

That was why I left the church while grinning as if trying to boast to everyone.

At that time, I happened to meet the priest of the church over there who was patrolling while holding a lantern.

“Wait a minute, you there. It looks like you just came out of that church.”

“Aah, yes. There was something I wanted to confess.

There is a good sister. Which church is she?”

It was certainly a conversation with such atmosphere.

When I answered, the priest seemed surprised.

“Oh, no way. There is no one over there.”

When he said such a thing, I laughed in spite of myself.

No, no, I had not thought of evil things, please excuse me.

However, apparently it was not that kind of story.

“It’s closed now.

Recently, there was a big lightning strike to the church, and no one can enter until the safety is confirmed.

That’s why there is no need for a sister there.”

After saying so, the priest scurried away and went to the church in a hurry to confirm the lock.

I also followed the priest.

Well, I was wondering if there really was nobody, and I was scared of being alone.

As it turned out, the door of the church where I should have been until a while ago had been chained and locked securely.

Even when we illuminated it from the outside, there was not a single person.

I was scared and it couldn't be helped.

I turned back to <Peat Street> in great haste, gulping down alcohol until I became wasted and fell asleep.

Well, the next day I overslept and woke with a severe hangover.

As you might have guessed, my partner was extremely angry.

But well, I was still wondering.

I wondered who exactly the woman in red clothes I was talking to last night.

(The story of Hans, Deputy Manager of emerging silk textile business)



The girls who were wearing colorful and ornate dresses ran around in the dusk while playing with each other.

Gold and silver and jewels worn by those girls were glittering in the candlestick lights every time their dresses fluttered.

Their appearances were like butterflies.

An old castle in the lake shore named Lake Castle, where Aurelia Ducal spent their summer and winter.

In one corner of the garden, a vast hedge maze was built.

The neighboring aristocrats' daughters who visited Lake Castle for the Star Festival in August, were spending their time playing in the maze for a while until the garden party began.

"Caught you!"

"Kya~! An ambush is cowardly, you know!"

"Is this all of us?"

The girls looked around and counted the number.

Of the girls who were playing tag in the maze, one couldn't be seen.

“Where is she?”

“Perhaps, is she still in the hedge maze...?”

“No, I’m behind you guys.”

A voice echoed from behind them.

When the girls looked behind at the same time, there was a girl in that place where there should have been only a stone statue of a swan.

The girl was wrapped in a blue dress and had supple elongated limbs.

Stars embroidered with silver thread shone on the frills with multiple gradations from dark blue to light blue.

It looked like night sky that peeked through between thin clouds, like starlight reflected on the lake surface.

Rich blonde hair gathered up with a blue ribbon, and a hair ornament with similar star design was also hung around there.

The girl in this blue dress was Erica, the only daughter of Duke Aurelia, the owner of this castle.

Erica, who had turned 11 years old, made the viewers feel a premonition that she was similar to a large-flowered blossom blooming beautifully.

While she still had childish features remained, on the other hand she had a mature atmosphere and strong determination within her eyes.

Erica was smiling in front of a stone statue of swan, she wasn’t sweating even though it was midsummer.

Her figure which was illuminated by the light of the girandole decorated with colored glass was like an illusion.

Looking at such Erica, the girls felt the sensation resembling awe.

“Erica-sama, since when...?”

“I have been there since a long time ago!”

“How did you escape without being noticed by anyone?”

The surprised girls surrounded Erica and barraged her with questions.

On the other hand, Erica made a faint bottomless smile.

“Now, I wonder. Maybe I was lucky.”

“Erica-sama, please don’t dodge the question and tell us.”

“If I reveal the trick, I wonder if everyone will feel disappointed?”

“Come on, Erica-sama.”

Erica also thought that she couldn’t dodge the question any more than this, and forcefully cast her gaze towards the ore-style clock.

“Oh my? I wonder if it is already time for stargazing.

Everyone, play time is over, let’s return soon.”

“You shouldn’t worry about that. I’m glad I finally found you.”

The hedge of yews shook along with the familiar voice, and two tall boys appeared.

A boy with brilliant black hair with a sharp look, and a beautiful blonde-haired boy with a sweet smile.

The young ladies surrounding Erica became noisy with the appearance of the two beautiful noblemen who showed up suddenly.

“Greetings, beautiful princesses.”

“Sorry for barging in while you were relaxing.”

When Auguste and Klaus greeted the young ladies, spellbound sighs and whispers started.

Everyone, although they wanted to refrain from doing improper conducts like making loud noises, suddenly became noisy.

“Kya, kyaa~~. Your Highness Auguste and Klaus-sama, why are you in a place like

this?”

“Both of you are as beautiful as usual, huh...”

As the two of them approached, the young ladies crowding around Erica opened up a path quickly by going away.

Erica suddenly remembered that there was a story of a saint who split the ocean in her previous world.

When Klaus and Auguste took her hand from each side of Erica, the young ladies raised high-pitched shouts of joy.

“Sorry, we will borrow this girl for a while.”

“Don’t worry about us, please enjoy stargazing slowly.”

As they took Erica back into the maze again, the other young ladies reluctantly headed for the garden party.

When there was some distance from the three people, particularly high-pitched shrill voices were raised.

“As expected from Erica-sama, to be holding hands with the future His Majesty the King and His Excellency the Duke!”

“How envious! But, besides Erica-sama, there is no one else that suits them.”

“When those three people lined up, it looks like a painting.”

“Anyway, I wonder who is the one that Erica-sama favors. I’m curious.”

The young ladies walked back to the venue of the garden party while speaking what they wanted as much as they wanted.

Meanwhile, Erica and the two guys had a pleasant reunion after they entered the hedge maze.

“Long time no see, Auguste-sama, Klaus-sama. Thank you for saving me just now.”

“It’s been since the Advent Festival this year, isn’t it. I’m glad that I seem to be useful.”

“It looks like you were doing something like a prank, Erica. That was just reaping what you sow.”

After saying so, Klaus glanced at Erica with his blue eyes and raised one eyebrow. As usual, Klaus had a lot of scolding against Erica, Erica smiled thinly and lightly fend him off.

Auguste pulled down the collar of the deep red perfect-fit and formal dress suit due to the heat.

It was a somewhat bewitching atmosphere, that was also assisted by him having long blonde hair extending to the shoulders.

Meanwhile, Klaus was dressing well and perfectly ordered even though it was summer. Wearing a black robe with silver thread embroidery, he didn't sweat one bit.

"We should change our location. There is a place where the stars look beautiful."

The three people advanced through the hedge maze, with Erica on the lead. Then, after a while, the three of them arrived in front of the stone statue of a dragon.

When Erica moved the part of the coiling horn of that dragon, a heavy grinding sound reverberated somewhere.

Hearing that sound, Klaus' cheek twitched.

It was because that sound was very similar to the sound of the mechanism in the Ruins of Visitor.

"Th-this sound..."

"Heeh, so there is a mechanism like this, huh."

The stone laying in the shadow of the stone statue shifted, and the stairs which continued underground appeared.

It was the entrance to the artificial cave, and it was connected to the outside of the hedge maze and the underground of the Lake Castle.

This garden was built as a double labyrinth, it was made up of the ground hedges and the artificial cave underground.

The three of them went down the hidden stairs into the artificial cave.

The staircase and passageway were charged with star crystal lamps, and a faint blue light was shining inside the cave.

Magical beasts and seashells of the sea were added as designs of the interior of the cave.

Its appearance was eerie, but it had become a space that felt nice and cold even in summer.

“Hmm. You used this place to toy with the other girls, didn’t you?”

“Uuh, you caught me.”

“I had expected that there was a mechanism other than magic, but to think it was this big.”

“Keep this a secret from everyone, okay?”

When the two of them pointed out the trick of her appearing in unexpected places and at unexpected moments, Erica revealed an embarrassed expression.

Klaus looked at her state with a curious face.

“Erica, you seem to be surprisingly childish.”

“What do you mean ‘surprisingly’, Klaus-sama. I *am* still 11 years old, you know?”

“If you think so, then act a little more like a child.”

“Hahaha, I agree. But Klaus, that wasn’t a good thing to say.”

As Auguste teased him, Klaus turned the other way with a sour look.

Erica looked back on their exchange with a bitter smile.

When the three of them climbed the stairs, they came out from the shadow of a lion stone statue on the outer circumference of the hedge maze.

The moment Erica inserted a pin into the device on the stone statue that was made like a crack, the stairs that led to the underground disappeared with the sound of the gears.

On the banks of the lake was a small boat carrying a boatman.

When the three people boarded, the boatman moved the paddle quietly and the small boat slid on the water.

Campanula flowers with small fragments of star crystals fitted on it were floating on the surface of the lake.

The ripples caused by the small boat rocked the blue lights, and the artificial starry sky made on the lake surface changed its shape.

Overhead, several stars shot across the sky, and each time it happened cheers raised on the opposite shore.

On the opposite shore was the venue for the garden party.

In the light of the candlestick, ladies dressed in colorful dresses were dancing.

“The starry sky seen from the boat is also nice.”

“Aa, above all, it’s quiet. It’s nice not to have any troublesome people.”

“Klaus should be a little more friendly.”

“I am fine as I am now. If they need more friendliness, you can lavish them with it instead of me.”

Hearing Auguste’s words, Klaus made a nasty face and retaliated.

While listening to the conversation between the two of them, Erica suddenly remembered something she was concerned about.

“By the way, shouldn’t both of you have a business in Lindis?”

“I was supposed to receive personal guidance from Professor, but yeah, it would seem various of things happened.”

“I was called out by your older brother, but all of a sudden he said that it became unnecessary.”

While talking Klaus suddenly spitting up grumbles about Eduart’s wickedness.

That he was being forced to do harsh labors, and made him overdose of recovery potions for late-night works.

Next, Auguste was talking about his opponents on this year’s Advent Festival, and the

growth of his hatchlings.

While Erica talked about the fad of perfumes, potions, and porcelains.

“Speaking of porcelain, I want to talk about Knot Reed’s figurine with Erica~.”

“Auguste-sama, what are you talking about?”

“Oops, I already investigated as to who was pulling the thread behind it, you know?”

Auguste smiled cheerfully despite cross-examining her severely.

Meanwhile, Erica desperately diverted the topic without changing her complexion and ran away from his pursuit.

Klaus who was listening while being amazed at their offence and defense, suddenly made a pensive face and interjected.

“That’s right, speaking of Knot Reed, it seems that there was a frequent destruction to the churches.”

“It hasn’t yet been determined to be a man’s work, right? It may be a natural lightning strike.”

“Don’t be misled. There’s no way that the altars indoor and underground could be destroyed by lightning.”

When the topic turned into things related to the altars, Erica secretly averted her eyes. Actually, the offender who committed this case was Palug.

Her targets were only the altars of vampires.

With her flame ability that she regained over these several years, she was finally able to destroy the corrupted altars.

Nobody arrived at the crazy truth that an angel was the culprit.

Therefore, various speculations such as the miraculous natural disaster theory, attack by the enemy country’s sorcerers theory, the crazy alchemist or a mage’s riot theory, were flying about.

“To do such an evil thing, I wonder what kind of fellow it was.”

“No, we still couldn’t say that it was an evil thing.”

“Don’t be foolish. Ignitia’s church officials and Lindis’ experts were appearing all together, so there’s no way it was something light.”

“Yeah well. But that’s why I can stretch my wings.”

In response to the findings that the altars were corrupted by someone, plans were being made to rebuild the altar network.

Only important people of Ignitia knew this, and Auguste was one of them.

However, he hid the matter and pretended to be ignorant.

As a matter of fact, Augute’s mentor was too busy in repairing the altars.

Originally he was supposed to be taught about Theurge, but since Professor was not in the academy, he became undecided.

That was the reason Auguste took advantage of that and came to Aurelia to play.

“What a troublesome bunch. Whether they want to investigate it or reconstruct the altars, they should ask Hafan to do it.”

“Even so, both Ignitia and the church have something we cannot yield.”

Hearing Auguste’s answer who implicitly hinted at information control, Klaus didn’t seem to find it funny and clicked his tongue.

Klaus also felt like the church was uncooperative in investigating this altar destruction case, but this answer could be said to be the definitive evident of that.

Mysterious cases which occurred frequently in various places was hiding behind the destruction of the altar.

The trails of the vampires were also scattered and cut off.

Eduart’s vampire-related investigation that had been going on for three years had faced a dead end.

Thanks to that, Eduart who had gained unexpected leisure time was able to resume the excavation plan for the Ruins of Visitor.

As it was currently in the preparation stage to confirm the safety of the collapsed place, it was practically in a quarantine state.

Although Klaus was once summoned, there was no change either in the investigation

or in the excavation, which meant that he was released from labor for the first time in a while.

While listening to the story of the two of them, Erica suddenly looked at the shore.

There, she saw a person waving their hands towards them.

From the color of their hair she could see at the distance, Erica recalled someone she was familiar with.

Erica ordered the boatman who served at the ship's head to bring the boat to the shore.

When the boat arrived at the shore, the person who was holding up his staff with the magical illumination on it approached.

It was the gray-haired mage, Elric Actorius.

His injury from the incident three years ago had healed, and at first glance he seemed to be as healthy as before.

The repaired glasses were also misaligned as usual.

"Geh, Actorius!?"

"Aaah~~, um, Klaus-kun, I am very sorry, but the Ruins of Visitor may collapse..."

To Klaus who was stepping back, Elric sidled up to him while pleading.

"Oi, wait a minute, why did that situation happen. Wasn't it still in the preparation stage for investigation by small golems?"

"However, Eduart wants to confirm the strength of the ruins, whether or not it is okay to send in the small golems..."

"That guy, what did he think the investigation using non-humans are for!?"

"In this way, in our team, it is only Klaus-kun that can be pursued.

Since the key is already issued, let's go with the transfer gate, alright?"

The conversation between them was extraordinarily dangerous.

However, Erica was optimistic that she wouldn't have to worry.

At the center of the problem was Eduart, who had overcome many crises.

Besides, Elric and Klaus would also join him, so they would be able to solve any problem.

Although a large damage might also be added to the Ruins of Visitor.

“Actorius-sensei, it’s been a long time. I wanted to talk slowly with you, but it’s unfortunate.”

“I’m very sorry, Erica-san! Let’s talk on another occasion...”

Elric ran with Klaus in his arm as if he was used to it.

“Hahaha, isn’t that nice, Klaus!”

“Damn it, don’t laugh, Auguste!

Get off, Actorius! I can walk on my own!

You are probably the one who suffered a serious injury! Don’t push yourself!”

“Klaus-sama also has it hard, huh~”

“Erica, whatever other people said~~!! Your brother is the cause~~!!”

Auguste laughed while holding his abdomen as he saw Klaus hurriedly being retrieved by Elric.

Erica was rather impressed with the powerful Elric, whose figure seemed weak.

“Even so, Actorius-sensei is powerful, isn’t he?”

“Klaus that guy, being worried or calling someone names, he should choose one.”

The two who were left behind laughed while exchanging glances.

“Kukuku, being a genius mage is not easy either, huh~.”

“Truly—... ah, there’s a big shooting star just now.”

Along with the cheers heard from the distance, Erica’s consciousness turned to the sky.

Looking at Erica who was in high spirits like a child her age as she looked at the

shooting star, Auguste smiled quietly.

“What a pity for him, as this is the precious time we can spend with Erica.

Well, thanks to him being busy, I can have you all to myself.”

“Eh, did you say something...?”

Erica looked back and tilted her head with a curious face.

Auguste reached out to Erica and was about to say something, but he was obstructed by a voice thrown next.

“I apologize for my rudeness, Your Highness Auguste. There is an urgent message.”

On the bank there was the steward of the Duke of Aurelia who held a single envelope unnoticed.

A small white dragon rested its wings on his shoulder.

Auguste had a bad feeling that the eyes of the white dragon resembled those of Professor who was his mentor.

Confirming that the seal of the sealed wax was from Professor, his premonition turned into conviction.

The content of the letter was a map of Professor’s room in Knot Reed’s Water Palace that was lent to him and a curriculum for Auguste at the business trip destination.

Learning five ancient languages, the history of sorcery in the last 300 years, telepathic training with four phantom beasts... although the period was set to be shorter, the contents were super-compressed Sparta training.

Auguste was speechless for a full five seconds, before he tucked the letter in his pocket.

“Erica, apparently I seem to have other business.

It’s an emergency, so even if I’m reluctant to part with you, I will have to excuse myself.”

“Eh, Auguste-sama too?”

Auguste went back to Lake Castle with empty eyes while being accompanied with the white dragon.

Erica understood that he probably would go to Professor with the transfer gate.

“Both of them seem to have it hard...”

When she was thinking of her busy friends, a loud cheer came from around the venue of the garden party.

When Erica looked up to the sky, there were lots of shooting stars.

It was exactly like raining stars, and Erica could see the beautiful sight created by the celestial bodies.

“Since it’s a big deal, I will pray for everyone’s safety.”

Because there were shooting stars, this wish might even come true.

While thinking about such a thing, Erica gave a prayer to the shooting stars.

Mysterious Story, "Maiden of Death"

It was a foggy night like tonight.

It was about the time when I made a living through stealing by forming an alliance with a wannabe mage called Rob.

When we were walking while hunting for the prey of the evening, we came across a strangely eye-catching young girl.

She was a terribly beautiful girl with blonde hair.

She was about 14 or 15 years old.

Although she was wearing blue clothes without decoration, I could recognize that she was a young noble who was travelling incognito at first glance.

Even if she could easily fool people with her attire, she couldn't simply change her manner.

That girl came out from the back door of a store dealing with high-class monster materials.

A black box-shaped carriage was waiting nearby, and she was accompanied by a single maid who was holding a bag that seemed to be sturdy.

Aah, by the way, there was a golden cat at her feet.

It was just around 9 o'clock, just after the night watch's song switched.

At such time, the girl of noble birth only brought one person to accompany her, and would return home stealthily with a box-shaped carriage.

There were surely complicated circumstances.

In short, she was extremely vulnerable.

The considerate us quickly thought of something.

Let's take that full-of-valuables luggage by all means, we thought.

Of course, the aim was not that young girl's household, but a familiar receiver's shop.

We used 'false deception' like a special technique.

It was a common purse-snatching trick.

First of all, I thrust my opponent with force, snatched the prey and escaped.

Then Rob came forward with a kind face, saying "I'll chase him, please wait here" and started running.

When Rob used his trick, it became even more effective.

He would put a dizziness spell occasionally as a support.

That way, most people wouldn't chase us after that, and even if they chased us, we could easily give them the slip.

After running away for a while and successfully regrouped, we couldn't endure our laughter.

Well, my partner and I took a roundabout path to an inconspicuous alley to look at the inside of the bag.

It was a little laborious to wrench open the bag.

It seemed that there was a strange workmanship.

However, somehow unlocking magic worked, and we were able to see the contents safely.

Everything inside were all ridiculously expensive things.

Flesh and bones and scales of rare magical beasts. Tiny bits of phantom beast fossils were mixed in.

There were rare stones of the West like the moonlight ore and twilight stone.

If we sold them all, we could live idly for 5-6 years.

So I was in high spirits and said "We did it! I want to see their stupid faces!" and looked up at my partner.

However, my smile froze in place.

"Really, do you want to see this face that much?"

It was the young girl with blue clothes that was looking down at me and laughed.
Even if I looked around, I couldn't see the figure of my partner.
Even though he should have stayed in front of me a while ago.
No, to begin with, there wasn't any sign of movement or any sound of footsteps.

"What are you looking for? *I* am looking for a bag."

Her clear voice didn't sound like a human being, it sounded like another being entirely.
I screamed as chills ran through my spine.

When I was about to fall down, I grabbed the bag and ran away.

Then, I ran away to escape from her.

I was worried about Rob's whereabouts, but the guy who was unskillful was the one at fault.

That was just how this business works. No grudge.

I ran away to escape from this confusion, successfully taking refuge in an empty alleyway.

So, aah, I stroked my chest in relief.

Then, I noticed that there was one woman in the supposedly empty alleyway.

I thought that she was a prostitute on this area at such time.

It was after I had quite a fright.

I missed the softness and warmth of a woman, so I said, "You, how much for one night?"

Then the prostitute replied, "I am not for sale."

As the woman turned around slowly, before I knew it she had turned into the young girl with blue clothes.

I was so surprised to see her that my heart felt like it was about to jump out of my chest.

I felt like I was about to lose it and ultimately used my wand.

It was the wand I got from stealing and I had been keeping it on my body as a precaution.

It was the Wand of Death.

I didn't intend to use it because I was going to keep it as a charm. Until that moment.

Just by waving it once, my cheap gloves got torn down and my precious wand flew away.

But, the black hands released from the wand surely had grabbed her.

That girl was supposed to have died.

However, that girl, she didn't even fall over.

On the contrary, she drew closer.

"Sorry, those who are already dead cannot be killed.

Are you okay? I wonder if you got hurt. Can you show me your hand?"

That girl said something strange and smiled sweetly.

It was a terrible smile.

Even just recalling it now, I couldn't stop trembling.

Aah, this was not good, this girl was surely a monster from the Lunatic King era.

The magic of Death did not work.

I thought that she had to be an immortal monster that was too terrifying for me to say the name.

I only had awareness until that moment.

It was pathetic, but apparently I seemed to have lost my consciousness.

So, that was the only thing I remembered of that time.

Before I knew it, it was morning and I was lying down on that back alley.

I, too, already had enough of such frightening things.

I washed my hands off from thievery since that time.

Ah?

What happened to my partner Rob you said?

His whereabouts was unknown.

Surely he was taken by that girl in blue clothes to the other world.

Therefore, I would never be able to meet him again.

How sorrowful.

(The story of Daniro, the rogue of a certain port town)



Autumn, Trade City Knot Reed.

Three days before the launching ceremony, people were overflowing in the city much more than usual.

The ship that was built this time was a new type cruiser developed in cooperation with Hafan and Turm.

Therefore, among the people who were walking on the streets, many were seen using staffs and robes.

On that day, Harold who opened the door of the Wunderkammer to take a lunch break was facing an unexpected situation.

There were two noblemen who didn't suit the dirty and rough room intruding.

"Ah—, welcome back, Harold."

"Well, well, Your Highness Auguste, you seem to be in excellent spirits..."

One of the intruders who were sitting idly on the sofa was the beautiful prince Auguste Ignitia.

Wearing the white uniform of the magic academy casually, he waved his hand towards Harold with a relaxed appearance.

At his feet, a small golden dragon was sleeping happily.

The other person who had short black hair was opening a dictionary-like thick book beside him.

He was wearing the uniform of the magic academy without any disorder, and it was an appearance with no gap like a strung up thread.

“So this is the rumored Nibelheim heir, huh.”

Harold's smile was slightly frozen as he was pierced by the sharp gaze.

Who is this black-haired beautiful guy with sharp impression, that is not inferior even compared to the prince?

Reaching the answer after only a moment of thinking, Harold asked.

“...You are Klaus-sama from Hafan Ducal, right?”

“Hou, you know well.”

Harold smiled back reservedly to Klaus who seemed to be surprised.

The observant eyes of Harold who was trained by the Turm elder was reliable.

Moreover, he had just finished the list of students of the magic academy at Erica's request.

There was no mistake.

“Please excuse my rudeness. I am Harold from the Earl of Nibelheim. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

This boy named Klaus Hafan was a member of the former royal family in the East.

They were the symbol of that land and blood and the spiritual pillar.

It would be a serious matter if he made a mistake in handling this person, so Harold became polite.

“Sorry. Although it was Auguste's wiles, we invaded arbitrarily.”

“The two of you are welcome any time,”

Hearing Klaus' gentle answer that didn't have an ounce of arrogance or patronization, Harold secretly felt relieved.

It reminded him that Erica evaluated Klaus as 'an unexpectedly good person'.

"I heard that you are 13 years old... you're quite tall."

"People in the northwestern area seems to be tall, Klaus."

"Yes, Your Highness. Furthermore, it seems that my growth period comes sooner than others."

Toward Auguste's explanation, Harold added on supplementary information moderately.

"I see," Klaus looked convinced and nodded.

"Well then, I will brew some tea. Please wait here."

Harold who finished his greetings successfully escaped from the Wunderkammer for safety reasons.

Quickly escaped to the kitchen and boiled water, he shouted with all his strength inside his mind.

(The Hafan Ducal!? The former royal family~~!?)

Just why exactly such important people are all in my store~~~~!?)

His burden and difficulties increased drastically with the appearance of the royal family *and* the former royal family.

Besides, this time it was Hafan.

According to the Turm family, Hafan aristocracy was stiff and prideful, respected formality, and very exclusive.

Moreover, they were earnest, idealist, *and* perfectionist.

Even when building the cruiser, there were great fuss due to them changing the specification thoroughly.

(That Klaus guy seems to be a straightforward person...)

Harold was reminded that he was going to enroll in Lindis Magic Academy next year. It was a city where diverse cultures and ethnicities gather, the City of Old Magic. He wouldn't be able to study in the academy he had been yearning for if he was upset by trivial things.

"Rather, this is a great opportunity to make connections. Alright!"

Harold encouraged his withering heart like giving water to a dog.

When the water was boiled, he brewed the tea with his usual procedure.

Then, when he had steamed it for enough time, he took the pot and a tea set and went back to the room

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting."

Harold had a business smile on his face and served them flawlessly.

He moved the low table to the front of the two people who were sitting on the sofa and arranged the tea set.

After that, Harold brought himself a chair to sit and sat down on their opposite side.

"Ah—, sorry for bothering you suddenly like this, Harold. It's because Klaus insisted on coming along by all means to the launching ceremony."

"You were the one who stuck to me like an appendage arbitrarily..."

"I see. So, the reason why both of you gather in this store, is it to buy a wand? Or is it for a different official business?"

"Aa, I thought we can meet Erica if we go to your Wunderkammer."

"Sorry, Your Highness. If you come at this time on the day before yesterday, you would be able to meet Ojou-san."

Harold responded reservedly with a smile, and Auguste was disappointed dramatically.

"A~ah, I thought Erica would definitely come over here~."

"Kuku, your prediction is off, Auguste."

Klaus laughed unreservedly, looking at Auguste who seemed to be disappointed.

“Well, if it’s today, is she touring around the famous pilgrimage places? No, is she in the direction of *that* furnace?”

“Well, who knows. Certainly, I heard that she would carry out an inspection somewhere.”

“I see, so Erica is inspecting something, huh. I hope she doesn’t thrust her neck in a dangerous situation again.”

Although Harold knew Erica’s whereabouts, he had to dodge the question.

At this time, Erica was out on the sea for a ridiculous business.

Today, Erica’s purpose was for the suppression of the sea serpent which had come northward from the sea near the continent of Karkinos.

If you said sea serpent, it was an even more dangerous creature than the kraken.

Moreover, the target which was planned to be suppressed was a super-giant marine animal called abyss serpent.

It was not a target which an ordinary aristocratic lady would hunt.

But, that Erica would be able to do it, Harold thought.

This plan was, of course, a top secret.

According to Erica, it seemed that she would pretend to inspect the inshore fishing industry and while at it, suppressed the sea serpent ‘by chance’.

“I thought that you knew, but it seems my expectation is off.”

“I’m sorry I cannot help you more, Your Highness.”

“Don’t worry, Harold. The one at fault is Auguste who suddenly came over.”

Auguste who got admonished by Klaus was sulking, picking up the golden dragon at his feet and buried his face in it.

Klaus looked at Harold and opened his mouth after watching Auguste with exasperated face.

“Well, I also wanted to see your face myself.”

“Heeh? Um, me...?”

“You are Harold Nibelheim, the alchemist who saved the city from the Cursed Sword of Fire, right?”

Being shot by Klaus’ sharp gaze, Harold felt like he was a grazing beast in front of a carnivorous beast.

His mouth was laughing but his eyes were not smiling unnecessarily, as dread stirred up.

“That was truly accidental... I just had a good luck.”

These were the words that also came from the depths of Harold’s heart.

He had absolute confidence in his own talent, but at that time he just had predestined factors.

“You must have saved the city. People were talking about you in Hafan.”

“That’s a fascinating tale.”

“You’re going to the magic academy in one year, right? I look forward to meet you as an opponent in a duel.”

“No, unfortunately I cannot use a wand, so it will be difficult for me to be your opponent.”

“Hou, that’s unusual. Why is that?”

Hearing Klaus’ words, Harold intentionally made a troubled face.

The zero inhibition value was basically concealed since it was synonymous with being defenseless.

But the other party was the former royal family.

Keeping a secret would be impolite, Harold’s mouth opened.

“If you are studying alchemy at the academy, you can understand when I say that there is an inhibition regarding external magical power, right?”

This is the scar I got when I accidentally used a wand as a child.”

“...I see, I’m sorry to hear that. Forget it.”

When Harold showed the scar on his right hand, Klaus looked apologetic for a moment.

Indeed, it seemed that he was not a bad person, Harold smiled reflexively as he thought that.

“But sometimes Erica-ojousan becomes your opponent, right?”

“Aa. That’s how I knew about your magnificent wand craftsmanship. I wanted to fight you.”

“I’m undeserving of your praises...”

Harold lowered his head respectfully.

Mages evaluated alchemy poorly, and then there was also Hafan family, the head of the mages, who praised it.

He concealed his mouth which broke into a smile due to the unexpectedly high evaluation from Klaus.

At such a time, knocking sounds on the stone door resounded.

The three of them stared at the door all at once.

“Come in...”

When Harold answered, the heavy door slowly opened.

Then, a young man with gray hair and a blonde-haired young man appeared from the other side of the door.



At that time, Gilbert Turm was heading to the Turm Wand Store by a small boat.

In order to introduce the talent who was recently hired to Harold, he came out of his business negotiations.

“We are going to *the* Harold-sama I heard from the rumors, right...”

“Ah—, well, you don’t need to be that nervous, Rob.”

Riding the boat with Gilbert was a young man named Rob who came to work at the workshop with Erica’s introduction.

He was a commoner from Hafan who had dark brown hair.

Thanks to his magical talent, he showed S-grade works in the workshop just like that.

As expected, Rob entered a magic academy, but he dropped out of school in half a year after being singled out by vicious aristocrats.

In such situation, he couldn’t return to his hometown, and at the end of his wandering, he went through Knot Reed.

It was said that he had lowered himself into a thief after being forced to live a hard life without any support.

When he encountered Erica by chance at that time and talked about his life, he was being introduced to Gilbert’s workshop.

“I’m trying to understand, but when I heard that he is the Earl’s son, unconsciously—”

“Well, I also feel sorry for your magic academy year that scary noblemen were gathering there.

But, Harold-botchan is special. He is practically the same as a special commoner of the commoner masses... huh!?”

Gilbert, who was talking with Rob, was suddenly hit by chills.

Gilbert’s instinct whispered that it was dangerous to go forward right now.

With this intuition, Gilbert had been saved from plight several times.

For example, when it seemed that he would come across a group of nasty senior aristocrats of his generation during his academy days.

Rob anxiously called out to Gilbert who suddenly fell silent.

“Suddenly your complexion got somewhat worse, are you okay?”

“Aa, I’m fine. No, it’s not fine.

...You know, let’s go drinking right now.”

“Eh? Is that okay?”

“Well—, somehow, I feel that today is a bad day, we will greet Botchan next time!

Yo~sh, let’s have a drink today! It’s my treat!”

The boat that Gilbert and Rob rode on made a reverse and steered towards the town bar.

Thus, as a result Gilbert avoided touching one trouble.



Turm Wand Store’s Wunderkammer was welcoming new customers.

The mage Elric Actorius and the alchemist Eduart Aurelia.

Elric visited this land every year since that incident in order to offer flowers to the site of the accident in the ruins.

This year he was unusually accompanied by his best friend Eduart.

“I’m sorry for bothering you, Harold-kun. This is the first time we meet after a year. Aah, His Highness Auguste and Klaus-kun are here, too?”

“Thank you for having me over. Oya, what a strange coincidence. Did both of them come for the launching ceremony and take the opportunity to come here?”

Harold felt a cold sweat flowing on his back even when a business smile still showed on his face.

Crown Prince of Ignitia, Auguste.

Klaus, the eldest son of the former royal family in the East.

Eduart, the eldest son of the former royal family in the West.

And Elric, who was probably an exiled noble from Karkinos.

Each and every one of them were figures of noble origins.

If it were a young lady of age in his place, they would probably be pleased, but for

Harold it was a difficult situation to handle.

“Eduart, didn’t you have some urgent business to do in Karkinos?”

“Heeh—, so it’s going to be a sea voyage from this place to the South? How refined, right, Onii-sama?”

When Klaus and Auguste asked, Elric and Eduart exchanged glances with troubled expression.

“No, that, unfortunately, Eduart’s departure has been postponed.”

“An abnormality occurred in the waters near the continent of Karkinos.

It seems that the sea serpent came northward to the sea area near Knot Reed.”

While talking about such things, Elric and Eduart walked down near the chaise lounge.

Harold stood up from his chair and greeted them.

“I am Harold from Earl of Nibelheim. Nice to meet you!”

“Aah, Harold-kun. I’m Erica’s older brother, Eduart Aurelia, take care of me, okay?”

Harold clasped Eduart’s offered hand.

This was the first time he met the busy Eduart.

“My sister seems to be indebted to you.”

“Same here, I always received favor from Ojou-sama.”

“Thank you for becoming a good friend of my sister, Harold-kun.

Oh right, I secretly checked the things you sent Erica, sometimes.”

Eduart was smiling, but Harold felt like he was being appraised.

Eduart’s clear green eyes that seemed to see everything was very similar to that of Erica’s.

Harold became worried when he thought that the wands he made was investigated by such person.

“Your works are very thorough and exquisite. Still, the ideas are unusual. I looked and admired them.”

“I’m flattered.”

“Crystal Cluster in particular is a wonderful work.

A simple and beautiful spell composition, and extraordinarily powerful.”

“No way, I am unworthy of such words.”

When Harold glanced sideways, Elric was offering the food he bought in the city to Auguste and Klaus.

A bread with boiled cow’s stomach sandwiched inside and a bread with raw herring sandwiched inside¹.

Klaus and Auguste were fighting on which one to eat.

Apparently, Klaus didn’t like raw fish, which Auguste found interesting and was trying to force the raw herring one to him.

Harold thought that he was envious of the three carefree people from the bottom of his heart.

“But, how surprising, Eduart. If it’s just sea serpent, isn’t it easy to get rid of it?”

“Klaus-kun, I don’t think sea serpent is a magical beast that can be rid by one person.”

Klaus who successfully got the bread with boiled cow’s stomach asked, and Eduart shook his head.

Your younger sister is suppressing it by herself, Harold swallowed those words.

“It is another thing if I have an offensive wand specialized for giant creatures, but it is not something I carry all the time.”

Your younger sister carries it all the time, but while thinking that Harold was silent.

Klaus was satisfied with Eduart’s answer and began to bite his bread.

Eduart looked around the room.

“Even so Harold-kun, you have a nice Wunderkammer, will you let me take a look around?”

“Yes, you’re welcome to look as much as you want.”

“Thank you. Somehow this feels like I am about to open the treasury of a ruin, I’m excited.”

Harold gave permission while being filled with trepidation.

After walking around the room, Eduart picked up one of the wands on the work table.

“Oya? Is this the Wand of Merciful Death?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Last time it was used is six hours ago... there seems to be a customer who uses such a dangerous thing, huh.”

“Yes, I agree.”

Harold felt impatient after the truth was discovered, but he nodded while hiding the unrest of his inner thoughts.

The Wand of Merciful Death was sometimes used by Erica when going to a place with poor security.

‘I will die before I die’ Erica said, but Harold didn’t understand the need to do so.²

“Oya, this is the Wand of Castling, isn’t it. It seems to have been used for a considerably long time.”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Is the user a ruin explorer?”

“I apologize, but that is personal information.”

Eduart guessed right in succession the wands Erica used that were left behind in the Wunderkammer.

Just seeing the scraps of materials scattered on his work desk, he recalled the time when he was told *‘Make a wand for a sea voyage’* and *‘An offensive wand against giant creatures. I want to see the real thing’*, and he resigned himself that Erica’s current whereabouts might be exposed.

Wouldn’t it be easier if he confessed?

But the willpower of Harold who had creed made him give up on that idea.

(I can't say it... I can't say that Erica is going to hunt sea serpent in front of this lineup!!)

The poor Harold once again screamed inside his mind.

Although Eduart's questioning was relentless, the mouth of Harold who was the disciple of a wealthy merchant was also tightly-shut.

On that day, Harold never leaked the secret of his partner.

However, the name and identity of the alchemist called 「The Abyss Killer」 would spread at a later date, and all of his hardships became water bubbles.

¹ It is mouthful, but I think this is the author's way saying that there is no sandwich in this world. That's why Harold describe the food like this.

² See the first arc, the effect of Death loses out to the effect of Merciful Death.

On the first part it is said '14-15 years old' this is not a typo. As seen on the previous chapter Erica has 'supple elongated limbs' which means she is taller than the average girls of her age.



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